A STUDY IN IDOLATRY

An Evaluation of the Doctrine of the Word in the Recent Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod Controversy, based on Owen Barfield's Theory of the Idolatry of a Literal Consciousness

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PREFACE

Honesty requires that I acknowledge the personal feelings which have been involved in the shaping of this dissertation. As a Pastor in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, I was affected by the events I describe. Although at first I perceived myself as one who could avoid the conflict, I soon discovered that the nature of the events made everyone a participant. As such it was difficult to gain a perspective that was fair to both sides. One motivation to enter the graduate program of the religion department at Syracuse University was to understand the issues and my relationship to them. However, it was not my intention to write on the conflict. My goal was to pursue an academic interest in the linguistic function of divine names which I had begun in a Masters thesis. A variety of influences altered that intention as I became increasingly aware that objectivity was not a means to increase knowledge but actually limited it.

With these influences in mind, I now include the thanks which are customary in a preface. First, I must mention Paul Spangenberg, a Seminex graduate who assisted in my parish in order that I might have time for my studies. He was more than an example of one who was directly affected by the events. He was a sounding board for my own feelings,

frustrations, and faith. I am grateful also to Herman Frincke, President of the Eastern District of the Missouri Synod during those critical years. He shared his wisdom, his support, and lent practical aid through sharing material which he carefully collected during the controversy. Finally, I must acknowledge the support of those in my congregation and the guidance of the religion faculty at Syracuse University. But as laudable as it is to give thanks, this is one dissertation that arose in a context of pain. It would be petty to list those who contributed to the pain. But to ignore that context would be wrong.

One way to express the polarity in my own experience is through an inscription with which Owen Barfield dedicates Poetic Diction to C. S. Lewis--"Opposition is true friendship." I look at the Synod which nourished my life and faith as a kind of corporate friend. As such I continue to value that relationship. I treasure the faith which has grown in that Church and I acknowledge with appreciation the opposition which has challenged my faith to grow. However, my judgment on the pain of division must also be clearly expressed. What Owen Barfield provides is not simply a platform from which to hurl this judgment. He provides a way of thinking that sees value in opposition while judging those who seek to divide the polarity. When the life-

giving potential which flows between the literal and the poetic is severed, both poles suffer. I offer this dissertation as my contribution towards the identification and alleviation of that pain wherever it may occur.

James H. Shaud

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INTRODUCTION

In order to defend a thesis grounded on the way of thinking advocated by Owen Barfield, some preliminary remarks on style are required. Since the argument of this dissertation is one that brings a judgment upon literal thought, a style which is itself literal would be inadequate and inappropriate. Typically, however, an argument is assumed to necessitate evidence, statistics, logic, and that which the word "literal" generally includes. If there is a limitation to this assumption, the reader must be prepared for an argument presented in a different form. That which follows does not deny the validity of the literal argument. However, the literal is seen in relationship with the poetic. As the life-giving polarity between the literal and poetic is experienced, a style of argument emerges that includes both. There are two ways to prepare a reader for this style. The first is to clarify what this dissertation is not. Once false preconceptions have been cleared away, then the style will not be forced into an unsuitable mold. The second aid in preparing the reader is to sketch the argument.

With respect to the three areas of thought which this dissertation brings into relationship, it is helpful to emphasize three literal arguments which are not being

explored. First, this dissertation is not an attempt to plead the case of Owen Barfield. By its nature, Barfield's stance is not one that can be defended in a conventional way. The proof of its value comes not by argument but by experience. In traditional language one might say that Barfield's position has been assumed. However, the selection is not arbitrary. His stance was "assumed" only after the present writer participated in a way of thinking with polarity. The influence of this way of thinking and the reality of the specific instance under examination were constantly in a state of interaction. The section on Barfield, then, is not so much a defense as it is a presentation. It is intended to help the reader enter into a way of thinking that preserves a polarity between the literal and poetic.

Second, as the argument proceeds into Lutheran history and theology, it is to be remembered that this dissertation is not an attempt to offer a definitive evaluation of these topics. Part of the richness of Lutheranism is its diversity. To encompass Lutheran history with any completeness would involve a level of expertise which this writer does not claim. The same is true with regard to Lutheran theology. Lutherans have a tradition of arguing theology among themselves to the extent that any summary will produce one certain result--some will consider it inadequate, if not wrong. However, when Lutheranism is considered not as

a body of theological statements but as an accessible form of consciousness, then the criterion for judgment changes. There is a way of thinking that unifies historical and theological diversity so that the word "Lutheran" does have meaning. For example, Lutherans speak of themselves as a "faith." Faith in that characterization means a way of thinking best described by one who has entered it. Faith, in Lutheran thinking, is a gift from God which can be brought to expression through the words and deeds of those who participate in it. It is this faith, that is under investigation in this dissertation.

Third, it is important to see that this dissertation is not an attempt to describe the development of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, nor to do an historical study of the events surrounding the controversy that divided this organization. Several summaries of the controversy have already been written. As people with various perspectives describe the same events the purpose for this dissertation becomes increasingly evident. Differences are not in events as much as they are in the way those events are perceived. The argument of this dissertation pictures the two prevailing ways of thinking about the Missouri Synod controversy. Thus, the format is not an exhaustive discussion of events, nor is it a statistical summary of what the combatants believed was going on. In fact, the value of the dissertation lies in the view that those most closely

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involved never did express their underlying difference.

The argument which follows is an attempt to expose two ways of thinking--the one literal, the other includes the poetic. With this purpose it is clear that the style of the dissertation cannot be one of traditional argumentation. This method would of necessity limit any conclusion to a literal form. Rather, the style of argument that permits different ways of thinking to be examined must be employed. A cursory glance through the pages which follow makes amply clear that this form is far from poetic. If the argument is not limited by the literal it would seem that some other literary form would be used. If not poetic, what is that style? This and similar questions presuppose a literal mind-set even with regard to the nature of the poetic. For Barfield, words themselves have a poetic quality. In his essay, "The Meaning of the Word 'Literal'," he shows that the literal meaning of a word is not its only or true meaning. One of his first books, Poetic Diction, is actually a theory of knowledge based on the poetic power of words to create a world. Poetry then is much more than a style of writing. It is also seen in the nature of a word.

Although the style of this dissertation is not traditionally poetic in form, it is an attempt to lead the reader to see the symbolic dimension of life and language. This path begins with a presentation of Barfield's understanding

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of polarity and continues with his identification of the idolatry of the literal. It proceeds through the way of thinking called "Lutheranism." Finally, the moral implications of literal thinking are explored through a conflict involving the nature of the Scriptural Word. Throughout this sequence the area under investigation is a way of thinking, not a summary of thoughts. Specifically, a polar way of thinking is contrasted with one that is literal. The purpose is to demonstrate the idolatry of literal thinking through the way the administration of the Missouri Synod deals with positions and people during a period of controversy which centers on the nature of the Word.

The first two chapters are devoted to the writings of Owen Barfield. In chapter one Barfield's major works are summarized around two leading thoughts--the evolution of consciousness and the polarity of life. Chapter two takes the argument past that of a presentation to one of judgment. "Idolatry" is a charge that requires clarification, especially as it relates to a literal way of thinking. It is important, however, to see that the polarity which Barfield advocates is not simply one possibility among many. For him there is a movement of consciousness which has been going on through the centuries, continuously evolving into higher forms. As a new level is attained the limitations of the previous one become painfully obvious. Although Barfield believes the scientific objectivity in thinking since the Enlightenment to be a necessary stage, he also exposes the fallacy in identi-

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fying the external with the real. He calls such thinking idolatrous in that it sets the world outside consciousness of it and then invests that world with ultimate reality. The word which best expresses a judgment on objects mistakenly identified as ultimate is the word "idolatry."

Chapter three is a bridge between Barfield's general indictment of Western thinking and the specific instance in this dissertation, i.e., the Missouri Synod controversy. The fact that the conflict under investigation occurs within the context of Lutheran thinking provides a surprising link with Barfield's stance. Lutheranism begins in an historical setting which Barfield presents in a favorable light. The Medieval world is one which involves a participatory consciousness. It is before the mind/matter dualism of the Enlightenment. The Lutheran way of thinking is operative through a law/Gospel polarity which bears a remarkable resemblance to that polarity which is so central to the thought of Barfield. This resemblance is heightened in that one of the primary means of grace which brings about faith is the divine Word.

Because of the centrality of the Word, the identification of literalness is easy to make. Chapter three concludes with three examples of current literal thinking among Lutherans. These three are chosen because they represent a literal way of looking at key periods in Lutheran history. At the same time they represent the main arguments used in the Missouri Synod controversy. This section is a good

example of the way the style of this dissertation differs from the norm. The examples are chosen because they present a way of thinking. If this were a dissertation about a doctrinal position or an historical event, the appropriate data would have been chosen quite differently. Those cases would require a much fuller treatment including a variety of nuances relating to the position or the event than is necessary herein. This present investigation is into a way of thinking. The appropriateness of the data is judged by its adequacy in presenting that and only that. For example, Michael Reu is concerned to defend the position that holds that Luther believed in a literally inerrant Bible. Reu is certainly not the only one who holds that view. Other proponents could have been noted and various nuances to their arguments examined. In presenting a way of thinking, however, completeness is not of paramount importance; symbolic representativeness is. With this criterion a mind-set is often exposed more adequately through the thinking of one person than in summarizing a variety of views. In choosing Michael Reu, Robert Preus, and John W. Montgomery, three important areas of Lutheran history are covered from a perspective that is self-consciously confined to the literal.

The fourth chapter shows how literal thinking interacts with a style of thinking which tends to preserve polarity. The specific event is the exodus of the vast majority of students and faculty members from Concordia

Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. Once again, the method is to sketch the ways of thinking that are involved. Through the interaction leading up to the exodus it can be shown that those with a literal way of thinking tend to define in order to exclude. Since this exclusion involves positions and people, a moral element emerges. What begins as an attempt to defend the literal truth of the Word of God moves down an inexorable path towards division. This objectivizing of people is not different from the objectivizing of reality which is so characteristic of a literal consciousness. In both bases the word "idolatry" is required. This chapter completes the argument of the dissertation by showing that the Missouri Synod controversy is indeed an instance of the idolatry of literalness which the thinking of Owen Barfield is so helpful in identifying.

Although the main point of the dissertation has been established, the final chapter takes this insight into a wider domain. It raises the question of the morality of a standpoint. Can a basic stance be judged moral or immoral? Clearly a literal understanding of morality renders the question unanswerable. A literalist sees no ground that can judge the one he is standing on. Barfield suggests that that very lack of vision has moral implications. The instance of the Missouri Synod conflict makes evident the divisive potential of the literal mind. As one enters the way of thinking which Barfield advocates, the inherent limitations

of literalness are easily judged. Such a judgment raises the question of whether one standpoint can be evaluated by another. Since what is at stake is the way virtually all contemporary thinking is done, the issue is not easily resolved. For those who enter the path which this dissertation maps the moral responsibility to engage the issue should be clear.

CHAPTER I

BARFIELD ON CONSCIOUSNESS AND LANGUAGE

Introduction

R. J. Reilly's excellent study of Barfield, Lewis, Tolkien and Williams, begins with an extended summary of Barfield's writings, book by book. In explanation of this approach, Reilly characterizes Barfield as the least known of the four, relatively unknown in England, and almost completely unknown in America.[1] At the same time, Reilly sees in Barfield

> . . . the romantic notions common to the members of the group . . . in their basic and radical form . . . .[2]

Though Reilly's first judgment on Barfield's obscurity may have changed since the publication of Romantic Religion in 1971, the second remains true. Barfield's writings expose roots. The next step then is for those roots which Barfield has established, to nourish new growth. Shirley Sugerman has fostered this stage through editing a collection of studies which reflect the many directions this growth may

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[1] R. J. Reilly, Romantic Religion, (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 1971), p. 21.

[2] Ibid. p. 11.

take.[3] The contents include an article by Norman O. Brown on interpretation; physics professor David Bohm on scientific thought and methodology; G. B. Tennyson on etymology and meaning; and others. Sugerman herself has expanded on the roots of Barfield's thought as illustrated by her study of sin and madness published in The Psychoanalytic Review.[4] If Barfield truly writes in a basic and radical form, then it is natural for his words to stir insight and specific application. This is the direction which I shall follow. Beginning with a general discussion of Barfield's foundational concepts, this study will increasingly focus on the understanding of the Biblical Word as practiced by the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. The intention is to use a specific event to demonstrate Barfield's identification of an idolatrous consciousness.

An Entry Into Barfield's World

In 1971 Barfield published a book on the thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The point at which Barfield makes his entry into Coleridge's own thoughts is taken from an event which Coleridge described in a notebook, March 17, 1801. His son Hartley, then about four, was observing the

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[3]Shirley Sugerman, ed., Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1976).

[4]Shirley Sugerman, "Sin and Madness: A Transformation of Consciousness," The Psychoanalytic Review, LXI (1974-1975): 497-516.

mountains by looking out of the study window. Coleridge picked up a mirror and showed him the same scene through the reflected image. The effort with which the son struggled to express himself concerning the difference between the thing and the image was, for Coleridge, an example of thinking as pure act and energy. It was thinking as distinguished from thoughts.[5] If Barfield sees this distinction as a useful entry into the thought world of Coleridge, perhaps he is also saying something about himself. Gaining access to the mind of another requires both effort and some sort of bridge. Barfield calls the experience of thinking as an act, the toll-gate in the middle of the bridge to Coleridge's fundamental thoughts.[6] As one sees Barfield's appreciation for Coleridge, it should not be surprising that the same toll-gate must be opened.

Barfield defines thought as the content of consciousness insofar as it is not sense or feeling. Thought, therefore, would include memory, speculation, theory, reverie, and the like.[7] Thinking, however, is the effort used to bring about such thoughts. Thinking is the act.

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[5]Owen Barfield, What Coleridge Thought, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), p. 13.

[6]Ibid., p. 13.

[7]Ibid., p. 17.

Thought is the product of the act. Thinking and thought are both involved as a geometrician draws three lines which meet each other. But the triangle which he produces merely represents to him the ideal figure which he has first produced by an act of thinking. Both the act and the product of the act are already there before the pencil touches the paper. They are inseparable from one another, but not indistinguishable. It is in distinguishing them that we come to the mind's self experience in the act of thinking.[8]

The danger in attaining this self-experience is the unwarranted conclusion that separation or division is necessary. As Coleridge observes:

> It is a dull and obtuse mind, that must divide in order to distinguish; but it is still worse, that that distinguishes in order to divide.[9]

An example Barfield often uses of the necessity to distinguish without dividing, is that of water. Although we can distinguish oxygen and hydrogen as components of water, they cannot be separated so long as the water truly remains itself. Thus it is crucial for all that follows to enter into the thought world of Owen Barfield through the same gate that Barfield opened into Coleridge. Thinking must be seen as an act in relation to thought as the product of

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[8]Ibid., p. 15

[9]Ibid., p. 19. The quote is from Aids to Reflection, H. N. Coleridge, ed., (Pickering, 1839), p. 17.

that act. These two need to be distinguished yet not separated. Those who persist in separation Coleridge characterizes as having a dull and obtuse mind. Barfield, as we will see, reserves the stronger judgment of idolatry for such an instance.

Barfield's Basic Themes: Polarity and the Evolution of Consciousness

As one follows Barfield into the thought world of Coleridge, two themes become evident that will be continuously developed in the course of this dissertation; polarity, and the evolution of consciousness. One way to see these themes is in terms of the alternative Coleridge promised to the prevailing Cartesian philosophy of his day. Descartes had said, "Give me matter and motion and I will construct you the universe." Coleridge substitutes for matter and motion, "two contrary forces, the one of which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or find itself in this infinity." These forces, he adds, are of one power. They are both alike infinite and both alike indestructable.[10] It is this polarity between two contrary forces that proves to be basic in the perspective of Owen Barfield. But this theme is never far from another; namely,

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[10]Barfield, "Either/Or," in Imagination and the Spirit, Essays in Literature and the Christian Faith Presented to Clyde S. Kilby, edited by Charles A. Hutter (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Co., 1971), p. 27.

the unity which holds the polarity in tension. Just as thought and thinking must be distinguished but not divided, so also there is a basic polarity which is related by the unity of consciousness. As one enters more and more deeply into the world of Owen Barfield, life's fundamental polarity and unity become increasingly evident.

On the frontispiece of Sugerman's Evolution of Consciousness, there is a quote from Speaker's Meaning which summarizes the importance of polarity in Barfield's thought:

> polarity [...] is not only a form of thought, but also the form of life.[11]

Sugerman observes that the evolution of consciousness is the theme of Owen Barfield's life and thought, together with the idea central to that theme, the polarity of contraries. This polarity is not to be understood merely as a coincidence of opposites. It is rather that the two poles exist by virtue of each other and at the expense of one another.[12] In terms of language these two poles could be identified as the poetic and the prosaic. Both are necessary. The poetic is identifiable with the force Coleridge spoke of, that "tends to expand infintely." The prosaic then strives to apprehend and identify distinction in that infinity. But polarity is not limited to any one realm. Barfield speaks of

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[11] Sugerman, Evolution of Consciousness, p. 1.

[12] Ibid., p. 11.

subject/object, conscious/unconscious, man/nature.

> . . . reality, individual being, however you think of it, consists in the polarity between the subjectivity of the individual mind and the objective world it perceives. They are not two things, but they are one and the same thing and what you call the objective world is merely one pole of what is a unitary process and what we call subjective experience is the other pole, but they are not really divided from each other.[13]

Although this may sound like a new form of the old Cartesian dualism, Barfield emphatically says no. This polarity differs sharply from the Cartesian mind/matter, in that it is operative both in life and in the process of self-consciousness. This polarity underlies the phenomenal world and constitutes its ultimate being.[14] Polar opposites differ from logical opposites in that they are not contradictory. Polar opposities generate one another and together generate a new product. In fact the experience of one's self over against that which is not one's self is a sine qua non of human consciousness. On the other hand, it is the sharp either/or of Greek logic, which, as the goal of the human mind, culminates in the Cartesian separation of mind and matter. This division is turn leads to depersonalization. It is the experience of depersonalization and consequently of disintegration that is the outstanding form of modern

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[13] Ibid., p. 18.

[14] Barfield, "Either/Or," p. 27.

psychosis.[15] The Cartesian either/or amputates the world of nature and of fellow human beings. This division is far from the polarity which, Barfield maintains, is at the very being of the world. A generative polarity gives life and leads to relations that restore meaning. Through what Barfield calls, the "moral imagination" we become fully aware of ourselves as subjects and at the same time respond to other selves.

> By preserving their separate existence and at the same time exercising mutual respect, human beings offer to one another the gift of the possibility of self-consciousness; and it is in this sense that consciousness and conscience are inextricably one.[16]

Though we shall return again to the moral implications of Barfield's position, it is important at this point to see the living human quality in the polarity which forms reality itself. Not only is this polarity fundamental; it brings life to the other basic Barfield theme, that of consciousness.

The thread that ties together the variety of Barfield's insights is that of the evolution of consciousness. In the introduction to a rather diverse collection of articles, Barfield explains:

> If evolution of consciousness is the thread you hold in your hand, it may

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[15] Ibid., p. 37.

[16] Ibid., p. 40.

> lead you into discrete and scattered places, but it will still be the same thread.[17]

Once one realizes that Barfield indeed follows that thread, then the wide range of insights which he elicits, come into a unified pattern. It is hard at first to believe that one person can make revealing comments on everything from Darwinian evolution to the philological history of the word "ruin." Yet as one grasps the thread, it does lead into scattered places with that same power of illumination. Philology becomes a way to experience the evolution of human consciousness. Darwinian evolution, on the other hand, is exposed as an externalized view of reality which has created a world of dead idols. Barfield's thread both illuminates and evaluates. What is at stake is the movement of life itself.

The Evolution of Barfield's Consciousness

Barfield never claims to be the originator for the understanding of consciousness that he defends. He continuously pays tribute to the genius of Coleridge, Geothe, and above all, Rudolf Steiner. Of the three, it is Steiner's name that raises the most suspicion. But if one is to take Barfield seriously, then this relationship must be acknowledged with the same openness that Barfield claims it. In

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[17] Owen Barfield, Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), p. 4.

a review of one of Barfield's books, Ray Hart suggests that Barfield's coat of arms must surely be inscribed with some such heraldic imperative as "Infringe the Tabus."[18] Though there may seem to be warrant for Hart's observation, a response is also necessary. If Barfield achieves a certain glee in defending unpopular positions, then the basis for that defense is called into question. Perhaps the nature and the seriousness of this issue can best be illustrated through Barfield's analysis of his friend C. S. Lewis. In an introduction to a collection of articles on Lewis, Barfield makes an unusual charge. He notes a change in Lewis that roughly would coincide with Lewis' conversion. And he explains this change with reference to a poem Lewis sent to him for comment.

> I cannot identify the particular poem I am now referring to, but on this occasion, after generally praising it, I added as an afterthought that it left me with the impression, not of an "I say this," but of a "This is the sort of a thing a man might say." [19]

The fact that Barfield chooses to make this observation publicly in a book devoted to Lewis, says something about Barfield's own sense of values. Certainly there is nothing

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[18] Ray L. Hart, "Book Review of Speaker's Meaning by Owen Barfield," in Journal of the American Academy of Religion, XXXVII (1969):310.

[19] Owen Barfield, Light on C. S. Lewis, edited by Jocelyn Gibb, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1965), pp. x-xi.

inherently wrong in stating something as another might say it. Yet, in Barfield's mind, a deeper concern arises. He notes Alan Watts' comment that Lewis adopted a certain ill-concealed glee in taking an old-fashioned and unpopular position.[20] Barfield then speaks of his impression that there were not one but two Lewises. And the Lewis that was involved in the "great War" between them was the Lewis that eclipsed those ideas that were immediate to him and substituted a conception more acceptable to the process of deduction.[21] Though such an approach may find acceptance with some, Barfield is not among them. For him, the immediacy of thought also has bearing on its authenticity. To make such immediacy conform to the processes of rational thinking can lead to the defense of a position that is not one's own.

Barfield's constant references to Steiner are at least one indication he has indeed made Steiner's position his own. The fact that anthroposophy is not widely recognized has not deterred Barfield. Nor is there reason to assume that he somehow gains enjoyment from infringing the tabus. Rather, the thread which binds the thought of Barfield leads him into areas which may be new to many. Therefore, to enter Barfield's realm, it is necessary to put aside preconceptions and listen for the ring of authenticity. But its very nature,

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[20]Ibid., p. xi.

[21]Ibid., p. xvii.

his is not a position that a person might choose to defend. Rather it is based upon an immediacy of perception which is given. Though the writings of Steiner undoubtedly had an influence in the way Barfield brings his understanding into language, this relationship must not detract from Barfield's own genuineness.

The leading thought which Barfield and Steiner share is an understanding of the evolution of consciousness. Though this thought is developed in virtually all their writings, the best collection of Barfield essays is found in the augmented edition of Romanticism Comes of Age. Here again, the best way into the nature and significance of this evolution is through the experience of thinking. Steiner has pointed out that thinking is an instrument of knowledge and thus anterior to particular thoughts. By starting with thinking we begin with no assumptions. Philosophical errors creep in when inquiries are made into what we can and cannot know, without first seeking to understand the process of knowing. Thinking is the foundation of the process.

> I ought never to say that I, as an individual subject, think, but rather that I, as subject, exist myself by the grace of thinking. Thinking is thus an element which leads me beyond myself and relates me to objects. At the same time it separates me from them, inasmuch as it sets me, as subject, over against them.[22]

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[22]Owen Barfield, Romanticism Comes of Age (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), p. 245.

Again one encounters the polarity which is common to Steiner and Barfield. Thinking is anterior to subject and object. In thinking one embraces both the self and the world. And yet at the same time, through this act one determines himself as individual. In the polarity between these two opposing forces, consciousness emerges.

Here, too, a distinction between thinking and thought helps to understand the movement of consciousness. A history of thought simply summarizes the way <u>that</u> people began to think. What is also needed is <u>how</u> they became able to think. This is the history of thinking. Access to this history is achieved through an evaluation of the meaning of individual words, while the history of literature or philosophy shows the development of thought. In the individual word the point at which thinking becomes thought is best seen.[23] It is the evolution of thinking that is most revealing and at the same time predictive of the evolution of consciousness.

Anthroposophy advocates awareness of this evolution. The goal of this movement is to raise one's self to a kind of thinking which is itself beyond words. It is concrete thinking, neither subjective nor objective.

> To be an anthroposophist then, is to seek to unite one's self not with any groups of words, but with this concrete thinking, whose existence can only be finally <u>proved</u> by experience. It is to refrain from uniting one's self with words, in the

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[23] Ibid., p. 53.

> humble endeavor to unite one's self with the Word.[24]

The possibility of entering this level of thinking is the stage in the evolution of consciousness that we now stand. Steiner calls this level, "consciousness soul." He describes it as a marriage of spirit and sense. The abstract thought through which the ego has cut itself off from the senses has been overcome. The typical experience of consciousness soul is that of nothingness. Perhaps I am not. Only one thing is certain, I do not know what I am. But from this experience overtones begin to sound forth. At first this may be a certainty of pure feeling, then conviction. It is this sense of oneness and wholeness that Barfield sees not only as consciousness soul, but the very stuff of which the English Romantic movement was made.[25] Unfortunately, this movement never matured.[26] It is this deficiency which Steiner/Barfield hopes to correct.

Steiner's stages in the evolution of consciousness seem to the uninitiate to be arbitrary. They are noted here, however, to portray the movement of consciousness, as well as to illustrate the moral decision which Steiner has given our

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[24]Ibid., p. 77.

[25]Ibid., p. 96.

[26]See S. J. Reilly's discussion in Sugerman, Evolution of Consciousness, pp. 183-190. Reilly argues that two aspects of Eastern thought drove the English Romantic movement to puerility. One was a stress on experiences of elevation and exaltation, and the second, a denial of time.

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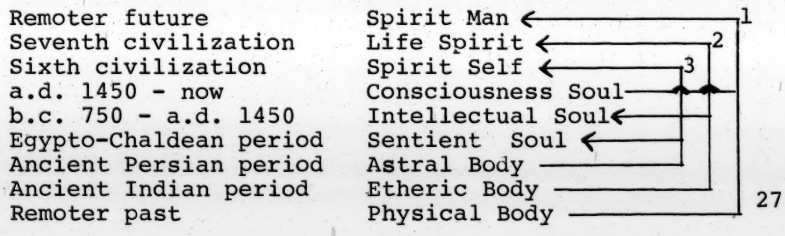
generation. Achieving consciousness soul and beyond has direct bearing on the way our culture is judged and the values towards which we should be striving. This need becomes somewhat visible through noting similar turning points in the evolution of consciouness which have already been made.



As Steiner understands the period of the Intellectual Soul, a dilemma in the understanding of consciousness became visible. It dealt with the relation between a subjective and objective world.

> It arose and was answered not by words but by a deed. This deed, the incarnation of Christ in the human body, and subsequently in the "aura" of the Earth, was the solution in fact of that divorce between a subjective and objective world which had only recently arisen in human experience.[28]

At root this was a question of meaning. It was answered by the deed of God. Steiner goes on to say that the same question of meaning stands before individual souls today. Yet

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[27]Owen Barfield, Romanticism Comes of Age, p. 98.

[28]Ibid., p. 103.

it is the same God who gave earth its meaning who also makes a positive answer now. This is the message of anthroposophy. Its mission is to assist humanity to achieve consciousness soul and byond.[29]

As one sees Barfield through the message of anthroposophy then one major theme, the evolution of consciousness, is illuminated. Of course it is never possible to sort out all the influences on any life. Yet Barfield's constant theme has a ring of authenticity about it which incorporates the message of Steiner and anthroposophy. Though it is tempting to deny this relationship in a study which will lead into the heart of religious orthodoxy, that denial is neither safe nor honest. The validity of Barfield's stance is integrally related to the immediacy of his intuitions. If he were simply definding a position, then his thought could be separated from his thinking. But it is this very separation which Barfield consistently warns against.

> Static abstract thought has death in it. As far as being is concerned, it can give nothing; it can only classify what is there already and rearrange somewhat its component parts.[30]

Barfield's writings are an attempt to restore life to a mode of thinking that has made nature into a thing, and threatens to do the same with thought itself. As we cease to identify

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[29]Ibid., p. 103.

[30]Ibid., p. 59.

ourselves with our thoughts we continue a separation that has death in it. One must assume that the life-giving movement of consciousness which Barfield so clearly verbalizes, is the thread of his experience as well.

Barfield's Themes As They Arise Through Language

The augmented edition of Romanticism Comes of Age begins with something of an autobiography by Barfield. As one might imagine, he acknowledges Rudolph Steiner with sincere appreciation. Yet Barfield's own evolution of consciousness does not find its source there. Instead he points to experiences with words, especially those of lyric poetry.

> What impressed me particularly was the power with which, not so much whole poems, as particular combinations of words worked on my mind. It seemed there was some magic in it; and a magic which not only gave me pleasure but also reacted on and expanded the meanings of individual words concerned.[31]

He goes on to describe the way an intense experience of poetry influenced his perception of the world.

> The face of nature, the objects of art, the events of history and human intercourse betrayed significances hitherto unknown as a result of precisely these poetic or imaginative combinations of words to which I have referred. I found I knew (there was no other word for it) things about which I had not known before.[32]

It is this type of experience that led him to a theory of

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[31]Barfield, Romanticism Comes of Age, p. 9.

[32]Ibid., p. 10.

poetry as a means of cognition which was published in the book, Poetic Diction. At the same time, his interest in philology involved him in a study of English words, The publication of History in English Words in 1926 actually predates Poetic Diction by two years. It is during this early period of writing and publishing that he first came into contact with the writings of Rudolf Steiner. Thus one did not lead to another. They all went on side by side. In fact, if one can speak meaningfully of a conversion experience, it would have to be Barfield's deepening awareness of the power of language. He himself says that Poetic Diction is a fundamental work. He adds that there is no reason to think of an early or later Barfield.[33] Therefore the foundation laid in his earliest books may be considered as a legitimate basis for the understanding of Barfield's own consciousness.

Both History in English Words and Poetic Diction deal with language--the first with etymology and the second with poetic sensitivity. Yet each relates language to a more fundamental concept for Barfield, that of consciousness. Through a study like History in English Words, the evolution of consciousness can be documented. And, as noted above, a similar yet more personal evolution of consciousness can be associated with Poetic Diction. This relationship between

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[33]Sugerman, Evolution of Consciousness, pp. 8-9.

language and consciousness is both experiential and foundational. It can be seen in Barfield's life, and in his earliest publications. But the insight Barfield shares cannot simply be called a theory of language. The power of the word is one which elevates the consciousness, whether that be the consciousness of an individual or of a nation. Language can never be understood as an end in itself. Rather, the life-giving power in language can be a means to a new and deeper consciousness.

Barfield's first published book, History in English Words, appears to be little more than an exercise in the art of philology. Although the evolution of consciousness is mentioned, there is none of the schematization that one might associate with Steiner, nor is there the zeal to waken the world to the dangers of objectivizing. Yet as one reads this book from the perspective of Barfield's later thought, it is all there. In fact, a feel for the evolution of consciousness is presented in this book in a way that he never recaptures. Though it is easy to get bogged down in the details, there is an excitement as more and different words are revealed. In a sense, one experiences what it was like to live in a setting in which certain words predominate and others do not yet exist. Or as Barfield himself portrays his effort,

> . . . language has preserved for us the inner, living history of man's soul. It

reveals the evolution of consciousness.[34]

It is this inner history which is not adequately captured by the many texts that list wars and kings. The living quality of a people is reflected by the words through which they are able to express their consciousness of the world in which they work and talk. As Barfield guides us we are able to see how some of these words change to fit the prevailing view. Changes of consciousness are also reflected in the creation of new words. Words then do not reveal simply a single dictionary meaning. Words have a history which opens up the living evolution of mankind's soul.

Barfield divides History in English Words into two parts. The first describes words which are associated with particular historical periods. The second, entitled "The Western Outlook," deals with various aspects of the Western mind. One example which will illustrate Barfield's method and draw his point, occurs in chapter 9, "Personality and Reason." Historically, Barfield deals here with the middle of the seventeenth century. The years under the somber control of puritanism are at an end. New expressions such as burlesque, ridicule, prim, travesty, and above all, prig, begin to surface. And as they do, Barfield makes an interesting observation on what he calls the moral cycle.

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[34]Owen Barfield, History in English Words (New York: George H. Doran, Co., 1926), p. 145.

> Certain moral qualities gain respect for themselves; the respect brings with it material benefits; weaker brethern affect the moral qualities in order to acquire the material benefits; hypocrisy is detected; all morality is treated as hypocrisy.[35]

It is at the end of this cycle that a word like prig is used to characterize puritan morality. And with this change, Barfield notes a general shifting of the meanings of other common words. For example, silly changes from its older meaning of "blessed;" the kindly word officious acquires its modern sense of bustling interference; and demure becomes "affected modesty" from its earlier meanings of "grave" or "sober." Words then are an indication of the spirit of the times.

But there is another change in the words of this period that is to have an even more profound effect. During the medieval period people felt themselves joined by all kinds of occult ties both to the physical body and to the world. With the Reformation, a self-consciousness dawns that grows in brightness into the seventeenth century. It is at this point that a whole crop of words hyphened with self become common. "Self-confidence," "self-contempt," "self-esteem," and "self-pity," are but a few. With Copernicus and Descartes, practically all philosophy begins to work outwards from the thinking self, rather than inwards from the cosmos to the soul. It is at this time that the word "ego" enters

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[35]Ibid., p. 145.

French philosophy,

> . . . while the English thinker, Locke, adopts the new word consciousness, defining it as "perception of what passes in a man's own mind," and at the same time impresses on the still newer self-consciousness its distinctive modern meaning.[36]

Barfield then notes the growth of a historical sense that accompanies this new self-consciousness. He concludes that there is a clear shifting of consciousness from the cosmos to the person. The "laws" that govern the world become increasingly impersonal. Matter is something outside man, and man becomes conscious of himself as observer.

> Perhaps the somersault was turned most neatly by the old Aristotelian word subjective, which developed in the seventeenth century from its former meaning of "existing in itself," to the modern one of "existing in human consciousness." Objective made a similar move in the opposite direction.[37]

Although many conclusions could be made on the basis of such observations, Barfield's restraint is admirable. Perhaps such a study leads one to use his own words with care. However, for the purposes of this paper, some attempt must be made to verbalize his insights. Clearly he has shown that words interact with the movement of life. Barfield himself is writing from the perspective of an historical period that permits him to use words which reveal this move-

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[36] Ibid., p. 154.

[37] Ibid., pp. 159-160.

ment as it has occurred through the centuries. In History in English Words, Barfield has expressed the reality of this evolution of consciousness so that it can be experienced.

As a heuristic device it would be interesting to set Poetic Diction in polar opposition to Barfield's study of English words, in order to elicit a deeper experience of consciousness. That device, however, will not work. If there is a value to such an attempt, it is the energy needed to understand why Poetic Diction and History in English Words lack polarity with each other. Such energy involves thinking, as opposed to thought. And thinking is what both books reveal. An illuminating passage from Romanticism Comes of Age helps to place the purpose for the two books into the same context. Barfield states that

> . . . thinking, in this living sense, differs from thought in that it is not merely an intellectual operation connected with the brain, but involves the whole consciousness. Thought is only the result of this consciousness.
>
> For this reason, history of thinking is often better revealed by the meaning of individual words (the study of which has been called Semantics) than by the parallel history of literature or philosophy. For the individual word is, in a sense, the point at which thinking becomes thought. Like thought it is the product or result of thinking, and literature (apart from its redemption by poetry) and our thought too, insofar as we have to think in words, is a kind of synthesis of these products.[38]

No doubt, this distinction requires thinking. But note also

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[38]Barfield, Romanticism Comes of Age, p. 53.

the two paths through which thinking is seen. The history of thinking is often revealed by the meaning of individual words. And, second, the literature that is the product of thinking is redeemed by poetry. The place of poetry as an act of thinking is the theme of Poetic Diction.

In the preface of the second edition, Barfield acknowledges that his little book on poetic diction is in fact much more. In reality it is a theory of poetry, if not a theory of knowledge itself.[39] He defends his theory in the face of the history of epistomology from the British empiricists through the linguistic analysts. The fatal flaw to the premise of all those who limit knowledge to sense perception is that fact that the experience of resemblance cannot itself have originated in the senses. Barfield argues that

> . . . the perception of resemblance, the demand for unity, is at all levels the proper activity of the imagination, or--as I have called it elsewhere in this book--concrete thinking.[40]

Once again the activity or experience of thinking is at the heart of Barfield's argument. Here is where poetry, or the poetic element in language becomes an important element of meaning. At the same time it must be added, as Barfield does in an afterword (1972), that this stress on the poetic is

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[39]Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 3rd edition, 1973), p. 14. First published in 1928.

[40]Ibid., p. 25.

not intended to exclude meaning from the prosaic. The felt change of consciousness which Barfield identifes through poetic thinking, is always in relation with, and dependent on the prosaic. It is this essential polarity that Barfield indicates through the quote from Coleridge in the epigraph to the book. In speaking of the two contrary forces, the one expanding infintely and the other striving to find itself in this infinity, Barfield intends the reader to understand the polarity between the poetic and the prosaic.[41]

In general the history of philosophy embodies the prosaic. Since Barfield intends Poetic Diction to be a contribution to this history, it is natural that his argument deals essentially with the other side of the polarity. His is not just a theory of poetry, but a theory of knowledge which emphasizes the contribution of poetic thinking. In order to understand the effect poetry can have on consciousness, Barfield leads the reader into an involvement with word combinations. He cites six examples which have aroused his own aesthetic imagination. He then amplifies on the felt changes of consciousness which these poetic examples can cause. For Barfield, poetic understanding involves much more than a temporary feeling of pleasure. The insight which poetry brings with it becomes a possession that actually has an affect on real boats and waves and swans. Normal everyday experiences depend entirely on what the perceiver

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[41]Ibid., p. 222.

brings to the sense datum from within.

> This ability to recognize significant resemblances and analogies, considered as an action, I shall call knowledge; considered as a state, and apart from the effort by which it is imparted and acquired, I shall call it wisdom.[42]

Knowledge then is not something which somehow exists in and of itself. Knowledge is an action which involves the knower. If one must identify the content of that knowledge apart from the act of knowing it, Barfield suggests using a different word, such as "wisdom." His point, however, is that knowledge as an activity of thinking, necessarily involves those elements of poetic diction identified as metaphor and simile. Without them, all meaning is lost. In order to grasp this point Barfield encourages the reader to use his imagination. He is told to picture himself standing in a familiar environment when suddenly every vestige of memory and the ability to recognize resemblances and analogies is gone. What would remain would be a meaningless roar fused into a chaotic panorama in which no individual objects, not even color itslf, could be distinguished. Such consciousness, if indeed it could be called consciousness, would be devoid of thought and even perception itself as we commonly understand it.[43] Apart from a unity of sense data and concepts,

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[42] Ibid., p. 55.

[43] Ibid., p. 56.

consciousness itself is without meaning. Or to put it the other way around, poetic insight not only affects concepts but the sense data as well. This insight heightens consciousness.

As one experiences the significance of Barfield's perspective, language itself changes. Meaning is no longer fashioned through definitions. Meaning lives in relation to the power words have to elicit consciousness. The felt change of consciousness which Barfield has demonstrated through specific examples, can be seen at the root of all words. Metaphor, then, is not one type of linguistic expression. Rather, it is a fundamental quality of words. Barfield attacks those who, like Max Müller, assume that the origin of a word lies in some simple perceptual meaning. A sequential account more in conformity with the data must acknowledge that metaphorical meanings are at the beginning of the process.

> Mankind never employed so many Figures of Speech, as when they had hardly any words for expressing their meaning.[44]

It is not that metaphors grow from some unitary identification of a sense datum. Rather, the poetic inspiration to bring to expression involves the variety of meanings which, in a course of time, are separated from the original experience. Thus, in the development of consciousness two opposing

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[44]Ibid., p. 72.

principles or forces are at work. First is the tendency of single meanings to split up into separate and often isolated concepts. But, at the same time, the poetic mind continuously expresses the unity which is language at its birth.[45]

Although poets may give birth to an insight through the invention of new words, the principal means bywhich meaning is created is metaphor. Barfield defends this point through an extensive discussion of the Latin verb ruo. What began in Greek to mean "flow," divided in Latin to express "rush" and "fall." In English, the word "ruin" expresses a further splitting up of meaning as Barfield demonstrates. Yet, great poets, such as Shakespeare, sense the unified soul of the word. In King John (Act IV, Secne 3, lines 62-65), Shakespeare pictures Salisbury confonted by Arthur's body lying on the stones where a fall has killed him. Salisbury speaks of himself as

> Kneeling before this ruin of sweet
> life . . .

Here Shakespeare has recovered the poetic meaning of "ruin" by relating the fall to the shattered body lying on the ground.[46] However, through metaphor Shakespeare has also expanded on this word as well. Although the transitive meaning of the verb "to ruin (something)" was already in use in

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[45]Ibid., p. 87.

[46]Ibid., p. 119.

Shakespeare's time, the passive meaning was not. Thus in Antony and Cleopatra (Act II, Scene 10, line 19), a new word is created in the phrase,

> The noble ruin of her magic,
> Antony.

This fresh meaning may have been strange to Shakespeare's hearers but not incomprehensible. The creation of passive destruction, even self-destruction through the active verb "ruin" is one example of the power poetic diction has to change consciousness of events themselves. Identifying this change is indeed a new theory of knowledge.

Conclusion

As one experiences thinking as the act through which consciousness evolves, then it is possible to pass through the toll-gate and into the world of Owen Barfield. Once in this realm, one can pick up the thread of consciousness and follow it into diverse places. However, this theme can never be far from the life-giving polarity of opposites which nourishes it. Without that polarity even this dissertation itself can degenerate into a systematized statement of Barfield's thoughts, rather than an exercise in thinking. To avoid this danger the genuineness of Barfield's own intuitions must be observed and acknowledged. Then one must experience the felt change of consciousness illustrated in Poetic Diction and observe the evolution of corporate consciousness documented by History in English Words. As

one participates in this stance he is ready to begin an evaluation that can proceed towards virtually any realm of consciousness. In this dissertation the journey will begin with Barfield's specific concern for language, and apply his understanding of the polarity of life to those who insist on a rigid literalism.

As the foundation for this journey the insights of History of English Words and Poetic Diction join together. Here one can see how Barfield's experience with language has formed his consciousness. Language and consciousness may be distinguishable as words, but they are clearly inseparable as the foundation of Barfield's argument. It is language that documents the history of man's developing consciousness, just as poetry provides access to continuing expansion. Yet consciousness is always in terms of a life-oriented polarity. As the poetic expands itself infinitely, the prosaic strives to find itself in this infinity. To divide this polarity is to introduce a way of death. Barfield's role is that of a prophet who must warn a people that they have chosen the wrong way. The mind/matter dualism associated with Descartes ultimately makes the world into a thing, and does no less to people. Barfield, who chooses his words with care, identifies the prevailing consciousness with the pejorative word, "idolatry." His is not simply another analysis of thought, or a discussion of

the linguistic form thought takes. His is a judgment on our lack of thinking. In identifying reality with the prosaic, polarity is denied and life destroyed. With the insight of an Old Testament prophet Barfield names our idolatrous consciousness. And as he does, he forces a new look at the power and function of language.

CHAPTER II

BARFIELD ON THE IDOLATROUS CONSCIOUSNESS

Once one gains access to a state of consciousness which depends on the preservation of polarities, then dangers become visible which are commonly overlooked. One such danger is the view that the literal is a form of expression which is most in conformity with reality. To attack this common assumption may seem inconsequential. But it is not. Barfield's judgment on literal consciousness is fundamental.

> The "needful" virtue is that which combats the besetting sin. And the besetting sin to-day is the sin of literalness, or idolatry.[1]

Obviously the nature of this besetting sin needs to be clarified. But the place to begin is with the seriousness of the charge. Unless the evaluation which follows is seen as a life and death issue, the point may easily be lost. Barfield's concern is not just the critical evaluation of a position. Rather, he is taking the life-giving principle of polarity and from it evaluating the state of consciousness that permeates Western culture. Though his conclusions may seem predictable, the force of his message ought not be mini-

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[1]Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World Inc., 1965), p. 162.

mized. In chapter one this message has been summarized. The next step then is to see how Barfield applies his insights. Here we will show that the identification and judgment of idolatry is the only way to preserve the polarity upon which life itself is founded.

An Experience of Idolatry
The Loss of Polarity

Barfield's profession as a solicitor has undoubtedly increased his sensitivity towards legal language and the human situations to which these words must be applied. At first it may seem strange that one trained to use the language of the law court would also be the author of a work such as Poetic Diction. And yet, a lawyer with the mind of a poet is not an impossible combination. In fact, what is impossible for Barfield is one without the other. Though the two may get at one another's throats, equity requires that neither of the diverse pair be killed. This point is stressed in Barfield's somewhat autobiographical work, appropriately entitled, This Ever Diverse Pair. Though written under the pseudonym of G. A. L. Burgeon, this book provides a way to see the experiential foundation for Barfield's judgment on idolatry. In this book he demonstrates the danger of removing polarity from life.

In a conversation with Shirley Sugerman, Owen Barfield admits that he was not always aware of polarity in his life. The very fact that he entered the law may have been that

polarity at work without his being aware of it. Because he was forced to live with his mind in the world of the law and yet was intuitively of a poetic nature, he experienced polarity as tension. Barfield confesses that

> . . . the tension at one stage became so violent that, together with other pressures, it very nearly resulted in a nervous breakdown; and I think I've always thought, looking back, that I avoided a nervous breakdown largely by writing that little book, This Ever Diverse Pair and really in a way I did it more out of impulse, out of desperation, rather than having any hope of ever publishing it as a book. The characters Burden, and Burgeon, are embodiments or symbols, or whatever, of a very real experience of polarity and tension in my own life.[2]

As the interview continues, Sugerman observes that Burden and Burgeon not only represent two forces in Barfield, but also the larger polarity of the Prosaic and the Poetic. She suggests that neither is favored but both are necessary. The Poetic is the more formal source of one's being while the Prosaic is the ordering and making distinctions necessary to life. Barfield acknowledges the point and continues by expanding on its implications. Thus, this little book, admittedly written from impulse at a time of great tension, may be Barfield's most significant expression of his own life-giving polarity.

There are many rewards from a careful study of This Ever Diverse Pair. One is renewed appreciation for Barfield's

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[2]Sugerman, Evolution of Consciousness, p. 21.

imagination. Another is the sense of humor which prevents the reader from ever knowing that the book was written during a time of emotional stress. But the greatest reward comes when one realizes the personal significance which the book has to Barfield, and is able to see in Burgeon/Burden the polarity of Barfield himself. As the story develops it is clear that polarity is not a simple thing to preserve. The tension, of which Barfield speaks in his interview, almost destroyed him. But it is the reality of this "death" that illustrates best the need for polarity to sustain life. In the dream with which Barfield concludes his story, Judge Equity smiles with understanding upon lives that maintain a proper balance. The tension which threatens to pull Burgeon and Burden apart needs to be regained, lest life itself be destroyed.

Throughout the story, Burgeon is the creative, ever mind-expanding "sleeping partner" of the solicitor named Burden. This diverse pair are ever in relation with one another. As their respective duties are explained through specific legal matters, a conflict grows to the point of crisis. Burgeon accuses Burden of lying while trying to negotiate a settlement for his client. Burden responds that lying and play-acting are recognized bargaining practices in most countries around the world. It is in the midst of this conflict that a particularly distasteful client appears on the scene. Burgeon doesn't want to see him, but Burden lets him enter. Thereupon Burgeon hits the client

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with a ruler, right on his bowler hat. He plays "peek-a-boo" from under the desk and scatters the waste paper around the room. Suddenly Burgeon notices that the client has gone and Burden is sitting quitely at his desk making some notes.

> "Burden!," I gasped in a weak, choking voice, "Burden!"
>
> "Well?," he said.
>
> "Did - did I really do all that?"
>
> "Yes," he said sternly, "but I didn't."[3]

It is this episode that sets the scene for the real crisis which occurs that night. Burden is upset about the conflict. So he approaches Burgeon and says, "I'm going to kill you." In the dialogue which follows, it is clear that Burden has the upper hand. Whatever Burgeon adds to the pair, Burden finds it unnecessary. The Prosaic doesn't need the Poetic. No argument of Burgeon makes the least impact on Burden except one, spoken almost out of desperation. Burgeon says, "What about when you die?" Strangely enought this touches a responsive chord. Burgeon continues:

> I convinced him that if he should survive me, then when in his turn he came to die, that most certainly would be the end. Whereas if I survived him, there at least might, even after my death, be something more. On this ground, and this alone, he reluctantly agreed to let me live on.[4]

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[3]Owen Barfield, This Ever Diverse Pair (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1950), p. 110. This book is often listed under Barfield's pen name, G. A. L. Burgeon.

[4]Ibid., pp. 113-114.

The reality of death then becomes a key to the need for polarity in life. Though the Prosaic can kill the Poetic, the Prosaic cannot create nor expand itself. It may be the Burdens who maintain traditions, but it is the Burgeons who bring these traditions to life.

Following the crisis Burgeon has two dreams, of which the second says the most about the life-giving quality in polarity. The setting is a court of law, at some point in the future. The "Equitable Jurisdiction Act of 1990" is in force, lending a more elastic human quality to the law. Equity is able to override the ruthless logic of common law. Burgeon suddenly discovers that he himself is in the dock, together with Burden. However, when he hears the judgment on Burden he feels a sense of relief. Burden is accused of limiting life to its practical side and living among the material comforts his job has enabled him to purchase. He is sentenced to doing chores for a fatherless family of five. At night he must read aloud to the children and make up fairy stories for them. Finally, he must read the works of Blake and the Oxford Book of Mystical Verse to the mother who is going blind. Then the judge turns towards Burgeon. He is accused of having a mind that soars, sometimes like a balloon. After some evaluation, the Judge sentences Burgeon to the practice of being a solicitor until further order.[5]

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[5]Ibid., p. 142.

With that Burgeon wakes up. But he also awakens to a better understanding of Burden. The book closes with Burgeon meditating on the kindly face of the Judge, Equity, as he sets off towards the reality of his solicitor's office.

This Ever Diverse Pair gives a picture of Barfield in the setting with which he is most familiar. The images are all from the legal profession. They are portrayed with a creativity which Barfield obviously enjoys. His sensitivities are clearly with Burgeon. Yet Burgeon, expanding like a balloon, needs Burden. But it is a need which can be generalized far beyond the images of the legal profession. One thinks of Coleridge's two contrary forces, the one which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or find itself in this infinity. What Barfield has described in a personal way is the polarity which is one of his major themes. This Ever Diverse Pair relates the general through his own life experience. Burden could not kill Burgeon without endangering himself. Alone, Burden could survive but not grow. Alone, Burgeon would blow up like a balloon. Together they not only serve the justice of Equity, but preserve the polarity of life as well.

The picture of Barfield, alive and well and living between his own personal Burgeon and Burden is an important foundation for understanding the seriousness with which Barfield judges idolatry. In itself the term "idolatry" is a serious one. To label anything as "idol" is to bring judgment upon it. Though that judgment has moral implica-

tions its meaning is more commonly expressed in the realm of the religious. In identifying Burden and Burgeon, Barfield has opened a dimension to life which is more than his own personal polarity. He has illustrated a danger which has its roots in the possibility of life itself. As Shirley Sugerman observed above, the polarity between the Poetic and Prosaic is comparable. Without proper tension between the two, words themselves can blow up like balloons, or collapse into inflexible objects. To attach the word "idol" to this latter condition is to understand the religious depth which his evaluation claims.

Polarity and a Religious Consciousness

Of all his works, the religious dimension of polarity is dealt with most thoroughly in Unancestral Voice. Here again Barfield adopts the story format to make his point. The fact that he chooses to name the main character "Burgeon" takes an added significance. This time Burgeon begins gaining insights that he realizes do not come from himself. He has conversations, and yet without a voice conversing with him.

> It was . . . something like this. He did not hear any voice. And yet a train of thought began presenting itself to him in the same mode in which thoughts present themselves when we hear them from the lips of another. They included thoughts which he himself was not aware of having previously entertained. For the most part the

> thoughts which were "given" in this way were naked of words.[6]

Burgeon's task is to bring these thoughts to word before losing them. But as the story proceeds he is aided by the Meggid. Exactly who the Meggid is, or whether that is an accurate name for him, Burgeon never finds out. As the book ends, Burgeon asks the Meggid to explain who he is. In response the Meggid speaks of the nature of consciousness. Memory-thoughts, he says, are like the surface of a mirror. Burgeon has looked behind the mirror. And what he found is thought. But the thoughts are other than memory-thoughts. They are the creative thoughts themselves. They are the substance, not only of the world which brain and sense reflect, but also of sense and brain themselves. They are not remembered, because they are one with life itself.

> Therefore it is that, when you experience them at all, you cannot experience them--as you do the memory-thoughts--as being "your own" because they are spun from your brain. They own an objectivity which in terms of everyday life you can better compare with perceiving than with thinking. And yet they are indeed your own in the deepest sense of all because unlike the memory-thoughts, they are also your substance and your life; so that to perceive them is verily to perceive the spirit within you in the act of creating.[7]

The Meggid goes on to say that this reality has been called

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[6]Owen Barfield, Unancestral Voice (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1965), p. 16.

[7]Ibid., p. 162.

many things, but has itself been transformed by that turn-point in time, the death and rebirth that is the open mystery of Golgotha.[8]

The religious dimension to this interior word may not in itself be surprising. The allusion to Christian theology may even sound orthodox. However, Barfield is never easy to categorize. In describing Jesus he makes much of the fact that there are two infancy stories, one in Matthew and one in Luke. Matthew's version includes a lengthy genealogy indicating that the soul of Jesus of Bethlehem is the fruit of many previous lives. In Luke's version the soul has no previous earth lives. It is an unfallen Eden soul. These two unite in the timeless which both dies and dies not.[9] Though this position may seem difficult to justify, Barfield's point is not one of Biblical exegesis. He is sensitive to the evolution of consciousness and the change in this consciousness that he associates with the coming of Christ. The fact that he would see a polarity in this new consciousness is not really surprising. The difficulty, however, is expressing the nature of the interior transformation which he associates with this turning-point in time. As Barfield says through the Meggid; there is an interior transforming agent, man has access to it, and the name for it is the

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[8]Ibid., p. 163.

[9]Ibid., p. 113.

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Logos, the Word that became flesh.[10] In fixing attention on the evolution of consciousness this word can be partially seen. But not only does this word have continuous significance, its reality is in a separate historical existence as well. Participation in the eternal, and separate in identity--this is the way Barfield sees Jesus, and why he speaks of the polarity of Jesus' soul. In this polarity is life, and this life is the interior and anterior transforming agent.

Idolatry and a Non-Participating Consciousness

In Unancestral Voice, Barfield not only begins to name the religious dimension of a life-giving polarity but also engages the scientific community in a debate about basic models. He presents this debate in a setting of a meeting for professional scientists. After speaking about the failure of the atomic model and the insufficiency of quantum mechanics, Kenneth Flume, the presentor, suggests that a new state of consciousness is necessary.

> What kind of a source can there be for the complex interacting rhythms of energy, of which we now find that the physical universe consists? What other can it be than a system of non-spatial relationships between hierarchies of energetic beings? And how can we obtain access to their realm unless we learn somehow to think of them without the help of models, without constructive models, without nature models, yes

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[10] Ibid., p. 105.

> and also without the poetic and the theological models of a bygone age?
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> Perhaps that will necessarily involve ceasing to think of them and beginning, instead, to think of their activity itself.[11]

The kind of consciousness that Flume (Barfield) seems to be arguing for is consistent with the rest of the book and with Barfield's thought in general. The danger with any scientific model is that the world is seen as separate from the self. Only when there is participation between the two will life be restored to the world. Until that time, the scientific model will continue to invest things with independent existence. It is this form of consciousness that Barfield judges worthy of the label, "idolatry."

Barfield is well aware of the difficulty in attacking the prevailing view. The scientific model is one that is so ingrained in the fabric of Western thought that it has achieved a kind of religious stature. It is taboo to question the model from a perspective outside it. Yet, recognizing the force of this taboo, Barfield must name the danger which this perspective has created. In doing so he picks a word from the world of religious thought. "Idolatry" is not only a judgmental term. It also brings the nuances of "illusion" and "false belief" to a world view that claims to be objectively real. Obviously Barfield's label is not going to change a mind-set that is so generally accepted. In fact, Barfield acknowledges the difficulty even of engaging this

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[11] Ibid., p. 143.

common view in conversation. Barfield's book, Worlds Apart, demonstrates the difficulty of trying to bring those who live in one world into dialogue with another. For example, he portrays Dunn, the linguistic analyst, as judging most of the dialogue to be meaningless. He rejects any concept he considers to be unverifiable.[12] Burrows, the Freudian psychologist, naturally evaluates the conversation on the assumption that meaning in general can always be related to primitive bodily functions.[13] Then there is Ranger, the naive realist, Hunter, the theologian, Brodie, the theoretical scientists, and Upwater, the defender of biolgoical evolution. These are representatives of but a few of the worlds in which people live. As these worlds lack the power to participate in one another they are truly worlds apart. It is this increasing isolation that Barfield associates with the coming of the scientific revolution. As the world becomes an object, then people and their standpoints are increasingly categorized and separated. This transformation of life into things Barfield names with the judgmental term, "idolatry."

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[12]Owen Barfield, Worlds Apart: A Dialogue of the 1960s (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), p. 102.

[13]Ibid., p. 113.

Polarity as a Participating Consciousness

In an essay entitled "Participation and Isolation,"[14] Barfield describes participation as a necessary means to preserve life. He argues that there was a clear awareness of participation between man and nature until about the sixteenth century. With the growth of the scientific revolution, a break in this awareness began which gradually became an explicit denial. Rejection of participation was then projected into the past, to the point of arguing that there never was nor never could be such a thing. This denial is expressly formulated by the philosopher Descartes in his partition of the universe of "extended substance" or matter, and "thinking substance" or mind. The mind/matter dualism lies at the root of the Western world-view, and makes participation impossible. Yet, Barfield observes, this separation is an illusion. And the illusion can be called nothing less than "idolatry."[15] He then cites his study of the idolatry of science as outlined in the book Saving the Appearances.

The argument of Saving the Appearances is an important basis for the argument of this dissertation. However, as Barfield himself observes, his books are difficult to

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[14]Owen Barfield, "Participation and Isolation," in The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays, pp. 201-216.

[15]Ibid., pp. 204-205.

summarize since they are already highly condensed.[16] Yet, for the benefit of those unfamiliar with his works, Barfield attempts the impossible.

> Very, very briefly, absurdly briefly, the argument of Saving the Appearances is, first, that the human mind is not an onlooker but a participant in the so-called outside world. Second, that this fact--namely that in perceiving the world we do not passively observe what is already there, but participate actively in its process--is today accepted in theory by most educated people who think about it at all, but is nevertheless ignored in practice. Thirdly, that this includes the practice of science, except for the case of a few philosophical physicists.[17]

Barfield then observes that what the mind perceives is mainly itself. It is the significance of this observation that he intends to carry through. When the concept of participation is developed, a picture emerges which shows that the outside world is not outside in the sense of being independent. Rather it is man's outside in the sense that every inside has a correlative outside. It is the obverse of his self-consciousness. One might picture it as a self-consciousness displayed as a perception.[18] It is this participating form of consciousness which Barfield defends with all the forces he can marshall. Because of the diverse worlds in which his

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[16]Ibid., p. 203.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. 204.

readers live, and the cultural force of the Cartesian mind/matter dualism, he cannot simply present a study in the value of a participating consciousness. He must first portray the need which a participating consciousness can fill. Hence, his format is a study in idolatry.

A Study in Idolatry

An understanding of Saving the Appearances does not automatically result from reading the book. Nor is it sufficient to summarize the argument. There is a depth to this book that is reminiscent of the changed consciousness Barfield identifies in Poetic Diction. There is a sense of the evolution of thought that calls to mind Barfield's History in English Words. But in Saving the Appearances an emphasis is developed which is new. Barfield clarifies what he is arguing for by portraying what he is against. It is the identification of this reality, or this idolatry, that forms the framework within which a specific event will be expressed and evaluated in the following chapters. Thus, rather than listing the variety of images and ideas with which Barfield supports his judgment, the concern now is to portray the stance which can make idolatry visible. Since the study to follow is one which involves a religious stance, plus an understanding of the nature of language, these two aspects of Barfield's position will be especially noted. The charge of idolatry can arise only from a religious foundation. To base such a charge on the authority of

"Barfield" would be presumptious if not blasphemous. Thus an evaluation of the validity of the foundation for Saving the Appearances is necessary.

Gaining access to the foundation of Barfield's thought involves much more than the determination of a theoretical position. Making his foundation into an object is precisely the kind of idolatry he is attempting to identify. The place to begin an understanding of Saving the Appearances is with Barfield's personal life-giving polarity as portrayed in This Ever Diverse Pair. The foundation is best seen through passing the toll-gate that Barfield opened into the world of Coleridge. As one sees consciousness as an active process, encompassing the polarity of thought and thinking, then the way has been opened to experience Barfield's stance. Due to the nature of this perspective, traditional criteria for judgment are not applicable. To say that the position is consistent involves a logical either/or that Barfield calls the way of death. To give "scientific verification" is to assume an objectivity to truth that Barfield sees as idolatrous. To speak of the foundation as intuitive is to individualize a stance that by its nature involves participation. Perhaps the best analogy to Barfield's foundation is seen in the revelation given by God to an Old Testament prophet. It is revelation in the sense that it is a personal experience that is not "one's own" and comes with an objectivity closer to perceiving than thinking. It should not be

surprising then to find Barfield including in his book on the importance of a participating consciousness, a discussion of the religion of Israel. The identification of idolatry is the function of a prophet. His stance involves a relationship with that ultimate or final participation, that cannot be described apart from religious metaphors. Barfield stands, not as a foundation unto himself, but as a prophet crying out against idolatry and pointing to that final participation in the mystery of the kingdom.

Before evaluating Barfield's position it is helpful to clarify some of his key terms. In the first chapters of Saving the Appearances, he presents a kind of epistemology that he intends to "save" all the appearances. If Ptolmey and Copernicus could develop contradictory hypotheses that "saved" or explained the movement of planets, Barfield can at least offer a new perspective for saving all appearances, even if it seems to contradict the accepted view. In general, Barfield argues that reality is participated. Although the scientific model that objectivizes reality saves the appearances, so too would a model that assumes participation between the perceiver and the representations. As Barfield explains the term, a "representation" is that which is perceived to be there.[19] However, these phenomena, or representations, are never separate from the process that makes

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[19]Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 19.

them recognizable and nameable. This is the process of "figuration."[20] What Barfield then calls "alpha-thinking" is the theorizing that takes place concerning the representations.[21] For example, one might assume that there is indeed a separation between a "pure" representation, and the figuration or perception of the representation. This assumption is alpha-thinking. Beta-thinking is the third operation. It is reflective thinking about the nature of collective representations as such. Though figuration, alpha-thinking, and beta-thinking are distinguishable, they are not divided by impassable barriers. Barfield's particular concern is with the interaction between figuration and alpha-thinking. His study itself then, involves beta-thinking.[22]

Barfield argues that there can be a collective mistake in alpha-thinking. He suggests that figuration today is commonly done through alpha-thinking that assumes the representations to be somehow detached. However, he says, this has not always been the case. Primitive figuration involved "participation," that is, a sensory link between the perceiver and the representation.[23] This is an aware-

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[20]Ibid., p. 24.

[21]Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[22]Ibid., p. 26

[23]Ibid., pp. 34-35.

ness which we no longer have. Thus, not only do we do alpha-thinking differently, but because we do, the phenomena themselves are different. For the primitive mind there was with the phenomena a psychic and voluntary reality that was given in perception itself. This reality was named variously as mana, or God, or Spirit. But whatever the name, the phenomena were not seen to be mechanical or accidental. It is this form of consciousness that Barfield identifies as original participation.[24] In original participation, figuration is done through a kind of alpha-thinking that experiences a relationship between the observer and the phenomena.

Even at this stage of the argument it is clear that understanding Barfield's key concepts is more than a matter of definition. The reader's own beta-thinking must begin to participate not just in the argument but in the reality of a relationship between phenomena and figuration. As an exercise in this form of perception, Barfield imagines himself inside the skin of a medieval man on the street. This is more than an interesting mental game. It is a way to experience a different view of reality, and to understand in a more personal way the changes that come about through the scientific revolution. A medieval man feels himself integrated to his environment through invisible threads. He is not an island sufficient unto himself. He is an embryo,

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[24]Ibid., p. 42.

dependent on his environment for sustenance and growth. The sky is not empty space. During the day the living sun poured down light in the same way that the heart gives life to the body. The planets, stars, and moon of the night likewise sent down their complex influences. The sea is no mere body of water. It is comprised of one of the four elements of which all things, including our own bodies, are composed.

> A stone falls to the ground--we see it seeking the centre of the earth, moved by something much more like desire than what we to-day call gravity.[25]

This world of a participating consciousness may be old. But Barfield's goal is much more than the reestablishment of a participatory consciousness to explain all the appearance. He sees in participation, a qualitatively different form of consciousness that judges contemporary alpha-thinking as idolatrous.

In general terms, idolatry is born as a collective representation when phenomena are assumed to exist independent of the perceiver. Barfield suggests that this change in figuration began to occur when geometrical and mechanical models were taken literally. The fear that was caused by such men as Copernicus and Galileo was not so much in their hypotheses, but in the nature of their theories. What they raised was not just a new theory but the possibility that a theory itself indeed might save all the appearances and hence

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[25]Ibid., p. 77.

become identical with truth.[26] Combining this possibility with the acceptance of a geometrical or mechanical model leads to a view that the representations themselves are geometrical or mechanical. As these hypotheses became part of the collective representation, finally "nature" itself retreated to an exterior world, accessible to mathematical reasoning and mechanical reconstruction. Once alpha-thinking about the world sets things wholly independent of man, the representation is collectively mistaken for the ultimate. "Reality" is imagined to be independent of human perception. But that which exists independent of human perception is not a representation at all. At best it is an object devoid of significance. At worst it is an object assumed to be ultimate reality. And the word traditionally used to describe an object believed to be divine, is the word "idol."

Idolatry may at first seem to be a strange way to identify the growth of scientific consciousness. The word "idol" normally appears in a religious context. The pejorative significance we owe to the Jews. The totemic idols, which ritually focused the participating consciousness of the surrounding Gentiles, were either condemned by the prophets as evil, or denied as unrealities.[27] It may seem unfair to

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[26] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[27] Ibid., p. 68.

identify pagan religious beliefs with the scientific mind. After all, Barfield earlier extolled this primitive mind-set for its ability to participate reality. However, the point of relationship must be clearly understood. What the prophets castigated as idolatry, is the investing in an object that ultimate reality reserved only for God. Barfield argues that the word "idol" is not an image as such (which the Greek eidolon connotes) but an image on its way to becoming an object.

> It does not, therefore, seem to . . . be stretching its meaning unduly to extend it to images which have finished that journey.[28]

Barfield has chosen his words with care. As the reader understands the force and judgment of the word idolatry upon the alpha-thinking that separates nature from man in an ultimate sense, then the prophetic warning has been heard.

Barfield's indictment has a number of implications. One of the most basic has to do with the theme through which he expresses his primary insights; namely, that of language.

> Once the fact of participation is granted, the connection between words and things must, we have seen, be admitted to be at any time a very much closer one than the last two or three centuries have assumed.[29]

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[28]Ibid., p. 111.

[29]Ibid., p. 84.

Barfield goes on to illustrate his point by observing the medieval concern with words. He cites writers from Plotinus to Aquinas who were in the habit of treating words and things at the same time under the inclusive topic, "names." Dionysius' De Devinis Nominibus and Aquinas' Concerning the Names of God, deal not with philology but with epistemology and metaphysics. These writings are representative of a lost world in which both the phenomenon and the name were felt as representations. Phenomena did not achieve full reality except at the moment of being named by man. Such naming is not simply a process of making arbitrary denotations. The human word proceeds from memory in a manner comparable to the Divine Word proceeding from the Father. To learn about words was to learn about reality. The word "literal" to the medieval mind, involves a sense of participation which made its meaning closer to the way the word "symbolic" is used today.

> To understand how the word "literal" has changed its meaning is to understand the heart of the matter.[30]

In Aquinas, for example, knowledge itself is the completion of the naming process of thought. The knowledge of the things that are, is the thing. And knowledge involves participation. All creatures, for Aquinas, are to a greater or lesser degree images or "names" of God. This sense of participation in reality is found to a much lesser extent in the nominalists.

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[30]Ibid., p. 87.

It is this changing sense of participation that leads to the view of reality associated with the scientific revolution.

Barfield further supports his point by invoking the arguments of Poetic Diction and History in English Words. The nature of meaning, he suggests, can best be seen through looking at the process of language in time. A study of etymology shows the movement from the concrete to the abstract. That movement points back to an original sense of participation. In original participation are found the roots of language. Speech did not come about as an attempt of man to explain nature, for speech and nature came into being together. Only an idolater can even raise the question of the origin of language as if it were in itself a recognition of something external to man. The roots of language are nothing more than nature herself sounding in man.

> The split between sound and meaning--for their relation in any modern language is not more than vestigial--is one aspect of the ever-widening gulf between outer and inner, phenomenon and name, thing and thought, with which this book is concerned.[31]

Barfield's object is to smash the idols and to point back to that original unity of man and nature through the shapes of words. He sees in the Hebrew language signs of that unity. Yet a simple return is not possible. In fact, as the religion of Israel indicates, the rejection of original participation may in fact be necessary. Barfield concludes his study by

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[31]Ibid., pp. 123-124.

reminding the reader that original participation is, after all, nothing more than "paganism."[32]

In view of the arguments Barfield elicits in support of a participatory consciousness, the label he finally attaches to original participation may come as something of a shock. But it is important to emphasize that his iconoclasm is not one that points towards a return to origins. Barfield in fact is appreciative of the objectivized view of reality associated with the scientific revolution. This, he believes to be a major stage in the evolution of consciousness which has cleansed the way for what he calls "final participation."[33] Understanding final participation can be achieved, not through theorizing, but through the imagination. Beta-thinking can convince itself that participation occurs. But the real need is for final participation to be actually experienced. Barfield notes the unaccountable rapidity with which the literally minded world found the "collective unconscious" of Jung to be acceptable. Although that is similar to final participation, the fact that it is unconscious leaves it with no epistemological significance. What is needed is a collective participation that is consciously experienced. This then is the final participation which Barfield sees as the next necessary stage

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[32] Ibid., p. 186.

[33] Ibid., p. 137.

in the evolution of consciousness.

Before looking at the role of religious metaphors in final participation, it is important to understand the function of the state of consciousness which Barfield identifies with idolatry. Throughout his study, he has shown the increasing preoccupation which western society in general has had with the phenomena themselves. It is this experience of things existing independent of human consciousness that he names idolatry.[34] However, this idolatry is not entirely without benefit. It has provided the ability to grasp objects in exact quantitative detail. This in turn has led to the value of being able to manipulate the human anatomy, for example, through surgery. Further, nature as object can be enjoyed as an "it." This, Barfield says, gives some indication of the positive contribution which the scientific consciousness can provide. The problem, however, is best seen in terms of where it is going. Barfield predicts that the continued growth of objectivity will lead to the elimination of all meaning and coherence from the cosmos. Pigeon-holing knowledge will lead to fewer and fewer collective representations, and eventually result in no means to communicate. However, there is an equally serious danger from participation itself. The imagination is not synonymous with good. A reversion to original partic-

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[34]Ibid., p. 142.

ipation leads to pantheism, mediumism, and much occultism. Barfield's goal then is not simply to attack idolatry. For him the appearances will only truly be saved when the imagination is able to experience the representations, as idols, and then experience them as participated. Final participation requires a profound sense of responsibility.

The sense of responsibility which final participation requires is motivated in a way that is seldom identified outside of orthodox religious texts. That motivating power comes through participating the divine name. In the religion of Israel the difference between participating the divine name, and idolatry, can be clearly seen. If, as Barfield suggests, religion requires a being other than myself, the danger is to make that being into an object. If I think of God in the same mode as the phenomena, then I substitute an idol for Him. In the religion of Israel this danger is clearly identified. In rejecting original participation as idolatrous, there are only two paths that could be taken. One is the sense of the increasing objectivity of the world, which is nothing less than increasing idolatry. The other is the increasing experience of the inwardness of the divine name. This sense of participation in the divine name is expressed in Exodus 3:14 where God names Himself as "I AM." Participating that name is not a participation in anything else. It is this sense of participation from within that leads to St. Paul's statement, "It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me." The Lutheran Reformation which

begins with this participation in Christ evolves into the literal consciousness of Fundamentalism.[35] Thus there are idols to be broken in current religious trends, so that participation in the divine name can open the meaning of final participation.

In discussing the incarnation of the Word, Barfield portrays the inwardness of the divine name in terms of Christ. Although original participation fires the heart from a source outside itself, in Christ there is a final participation which fires the heart from within. In doing so a new moral standpoint is achieved which may mean doing violence to current moral judgments. Those who move forward to a new plane may find that they are not always understood. But the morality which is fired from within will combat the besetting sin. And as Barfield has experienced it, that sin is literalness or idolatry.[36] Unfortunately, only those who have turned (metanoia) can hear the divine name and participate in the "I AM." In the days of Jesus, phariseeism made morality into idolatry. Today we are plagued by mental and sensuous phariseeism which is no less dangerous. Participating the divine name of Christ opens the way to final participation. But in the process the world of idols which has been created by the scientific revolution,

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[35] Ibid., p. 159.

[36] Ibid., p. 161.

may still be remembered favorably as the way through which the appearances were scoured and freed from original participation, preparing us to receive final participation.

The Idolatry of Literalness

Although Saving the Appearances was published in 1957, Barfield has yet to elaborate on the significance of the divine name. As was observed above, he has a tendency to write in summary fashion, leaving the reader to fill in the details and make the applications. However, there is one theme that Barfield saw fit to develop which has particular relevance to the evaluation which will follow. That theme is the nature of language. Specifically, Barfield identifies literalness as the linguistic form of idolatry. In the context of Saving the Appearances, literalness is associated with a non-participating consciousness that can make even words into things. In the evolution of consciousness, which forms the principal framework for the argument of Saving the Appearances, it is worth emphasizing that the word "literal" may have meant to the medieval mind that which today is intended by the word "symbolic."[37] However, the second major Barfield theme, that of polarity, can also be applied. In an article entitled, "The Meaning of the Word 'Literal'," Barfield takes the issue into the polarity of life and again observes the idolatry of literalness. Using a distinction of

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[37]Ibid., p. 87.

I. A. Richards, Barfield speaks of the literal or surface meaning of a word as the vehicle, while the tenor is any other meaning which the word properly conveys.[38] For example, the vehicular meaning of "outsider" is that of spatial externality, while the tenor conveys the idea of caddishness or originality. "Noble" is used to refer to a particular social rank, while the tenor of the word connotes high character. The vehicle of the word "scruple" is the Latin scrupulus, originally a small sharp stone. The tenor of the word expresses a sensitivity to moral values. In each case the vehicle is a reference to something in the outside world, while the tenor conveys a moral quality or a feeling not accessible to sense-observation.[39] It is this polarity that Barfield then evaluates.

He cites Emerson and Jeremy Bentham to substantiate the common view that words which express a moral or intellectual quality are at root borrowed from material experience.[40] If this inference is correct, then the history of nouns which today have an immaterial meaning and no other, must have evolved in the following way. First, they had a literal

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[38]Owen Barfield, "The Meaning of the Word 'Literal'," in The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays, p. 49.

[39]Ibid., p. 50.

[40]Ibid., p. 51.

meaning which referred to a material object. Second, a concomitant meaning developed which combined the literal with an immaterial symbolism. Third, the literal was lost (as in the case of "scruple") and the concomitant meaning substituted. The fourth and final stage is one in which the changed meaning becomes literal. The word "spirit" which began as breath, is an example of this fourth stage. However, this common understanding of the development of words is one that Barfield argues is fallacious.

The assumption which underlies this false understanding of a noun, is the view that its real function is to identify a thing. This assumption then procedes to the conclusion that in stage one they are "born literal," and that in the fourth stage they again achieve literalness. The stance that words are born literal raises a real problem with the origin of the metaphorical meaning. Those who believe that the tenor of a word develops as a result of a metaphor-making activity of the human mind cannot explain how a literally oriented ancestor could have ever expressed the metaphorical through the literal. Unless there is an immaterial tenor already in a word, a metaphorical meaning cannot develop. Those who escape the dilemma by assuming that the tenor cannot always be expressed literally still cannot argue past the "born literal" stage. It is impossible to clothe a word with a metaphorical meaning if the words you are using have no immaterial overtones in them. And if they

have these overtones, then they are not truly born literal. Barfield is led to the conclusion that born literalness is a historical fallacy.

> Literalness is a quality which some words have achieved in the course of their history; it is not a quality with which the first words were born.[41]

Literal, in the sense of being a word or meaning with a vehicle only and no tenor, is an achieved state, not an original one. Just as an immaterial word can acquire literal meaning by dropping the vehicular reference, so a material word can become literal by dropping its tenorial reference.

> Whatever else the word "literal" means, then, it normally means something which is the end-product of a long historical process.[42]

As such, the literal cannot correspond with the real. In terms of this relationship there is indeed no such thing as literalness.

> The most we can safely say, therefore, is that the literal and discursive use of language is the way it is used by a speaker, who is either unaware of, or is deliberately ignoring, that real and figurative relation between man and his environment, out of which the words he is using were born, and without which they could never have been born.[43]

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[41] Ibid., p. 55.

[42] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[43] Ibid., p. 57.

Conclusion

Literalness, then, is a good point at which to identify that which Barfield calls the besetting sin of idolatry. Through books which relate language and consciousness, Barfield first expresses the positive value of this relationship. In Poetic Diction he argues that poetic meaning involves a "felt change of consciousness."[44] But the ever expanding poetic cannot exist in isolation. It is in the polarity between the prosaic and the poetic that Coleridge's "two contrary forces" are brought into relationship. The life-process itself requires the expansive function of poetic insight to be balanced by the particularizing of the prosaic. History in English Words adds to this understanding of language, Barfield's other major theme, that of the evolution of consciousness. As he traces the meanings of words and their origins, he demonstrates that a change in collective representations can be made visible. As Barfield's major themes are expressed positively in terms of language, so also is a danger exposed through the same means. A lack of polarity can lead to a word devoid of either its vehicle or its tenor. Literalness in this sense is not a criterion of truth. On the contrary. Just as words cannot be born literal, so also their achieved literalness is an end product that severs the actual relation between man and environment. Literalness in this sense makes words into

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[44]Barfield, Poetic Diction, p. 48.

objects which deserve to be judged idolatrous. The literalness of the scientific world ties idolatry to the other Barfield theme, that of the evolution of consciousness. He develops this theme at length in Saving the Appearances. Here the reality of a participating consciousness is demonstrated, and a lack of participation is named as the idolatry of the contemporary mind. Language then is Barfield's favorite way to portray the themes of polarity and consciousness both positively and judgmentally.

What remains is to take Barfield's perspective and test it through specific application. Though one might approach this task through defense or judgment, it is the latter path which will be followed. Both Saving the Appearances and "The Meaning of the Word 'Literal'" express a clash in perspectives that rings most clearly. In challenging the prevailing views, the burden rests upon Barfield. The weight of the burden itself might destroy the perspective were it not for the quality of life which burgeons forth when it is applied. To demonstrate this phenomenon a specific case is needed. Perhaps none is more fitting than an instance which centers on the nature of the word and applies it basically in a literal way. If such an instance can be demonstrated to embody the characteristics of idolatry, then Barfield's perspective is supported. It is with this intention that the following is presented.

CHAPTER III

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD IN THE LUTERHAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Introduction

On February 19, 1974, forty-five of the fifty faculty members of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, officially left the campus together with some three hundred eighty students. The depth of this protest is documented by the fact that they felt constrained to set up a new seminary, a "Seminary in Exile." The formation of what was to be called "Seminex" is an instance involving a clash of perspectives. At the center of a variety of satellite issues is a basic difference in understanding words in general and God's scriptural Word in particular. The founders of Seminex reacted actively to the strictures of literalness which they perceived were binding them. Eventually they found themselves in a position of either having to accede to this stance or to take action to preserve what they saw to be a more genuine understanding of God's Word. For many of them the Gospel itself was at stake. The controversy surrounding this event provides a way to see the workings of that which Barfield has identified as an idolatrous consciousness. Although Barfield makes

the observation that literalness is allied with such concepts as "sin" and "idolatry," this relationship is not immediately apparent. The following is an attempt to make visible the religious and moral implications of a literal stance. Although the formation of Seminex provides the example, what is at issue is the religious understanding of the Word itself. Therefore, the events that led to the formation of Seminex must first be placed into the wider context of Lutheran theology.

An Entry into the World of Lutherans

Entering the thought world of a definable group of people involves problems slightly different from entering the world of Coleridge or even Barfield. One such problem is the need to speak in terms of a collective consciousness. A second is finding an authoritative expression of that consciousness. A third is providing access to it. The very fact that a group exists that thinks of itself in some sense as being "Lutheran" is at least an indication that a collective identify has meaning. Since Barfield is an advocate of the reality of a collective consciousness,[1] there is additional incentive to bring such a consciousness to expression. Access to an authoritative understanding of this form of consciousness, however, provides the real stumbling block. Barfield has clearly pointed to the danger

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[1]Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 135.

in separating thought from thinking; separating a position from the experience of the position. An understanding of the Lutheran doctrine of the Word by its very nature involves more than a summary of statements. As a religious stance the need for belief, if not conversion, precedes understanding. Since in Lutheran theology conversion comes about through the means of grace, the Word and Sacraments, it is inappropriate to speak of the nature of this Word apart from faith. Thus, once again there is a toll-gate that must be passed. The bridge to a genuinely Lutheran consciousness cannot be reduced to position statements. Faith, particularly a Christ-centered faith, provides the key without which the bridge is blocked and the Word locked.

The difficulty in gaining access does not automatically make further discussion impossible. Barfield continues to write of his form of consciousness as do the Lutherans. What they state can be compared and differences can be pointed out. Bearing in mind then that access to each seems to be different, what emerges is an even more remarkable similarity. Barfield, who to my knowledge has but one sentence in all his writings referring to Lutherans,[2] sounds a great deal like those, who to my knowledge refer to him even less. Just as Barfield's leading thought is the evolution of consciousness, so also Lutherans find a consciousness in faith that leads to virtually all areas of life. Just as

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[2]Ibid., p. 159.

Barfield's leading thought is not far from a second, polarity, so also Lutherans express their faith through a law/Gospel polarity. Just as Barfield finds his basic concepts grounded in the power of the word, so also Lutherans view the Word as a means of grace, a means to bring about the consciousness that gives life. What follows is an attempt to demonstrate, insofar as demonstration is possible, that there is a similarity between Barfield's basic concepts and those of Lutheranism. This similarity will give a stance from which to view and evaluate the clash that occurs within Lutheranism.

The Lutheran Consciousness: Der Evangelische Ansatz

There is a unique study of the form and nature of Lutheranism by the German theologian, Werner Elert.[3] The purpose of this study is to express the basic Lutheran consciousness as it exists and has existed since the time of Luther. Rather than listing Elert's credentials, the foreword by Jaraslov Pelikan, nicely summarizes the value and scope of this book. Pelikan observes that the spirit of Lutheranism is not intelligible solely on the basis of its confessional writings. Certain the Book of Concord of 1580, the Augsburg Confession, and even Luther's Small Catechism, have done much to unify Lutheran thought.

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[3]Werner Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, translated from the German Die Morphologie des Luthertums by Walter Hansen (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1962).

> But can one really understand the Lutheran Church without carefully studying (to name only three elements) its treasure of hymns, Luther's translation of the Bible, and the figure of the Reformer himself? To be sure, it would lead to hopeless relativism if one were to say that Lutheranism is everything that Lutheranism has ever been or that Lutherans have ever said it is. But it is also a hopeless reductionism if one isolates the confessions from Lutheran history and reads them apart from the context within which they arose and through which they have been handed down.
>
> Between (or beyond) this impossible choice of reductionism and relativism is a method that can interpret the Lutheran confessions historically and Lutheran history confessionally. Such was the method of Werner Elert.[4]

Pelikan rightly points out that Lutheranism cannot be relativized to mean everything every Lutheran says it means. Yet, Elert's book is a legitimate way to find expression of the collective Lutheran consciousness. Elert himself has tried to reflect not only the scholarly Lutheran dogmatics texts, but also catechisms, rituals, the literature of controversy, and even church hymns and sermons.[5] In all these forms he finds the existence of a dynamic that has shaped the Lutheran confessions and formed its heritage. This dynamic Elert names, "the impact of the Gospel."

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[4]Jaroslav Pelikan , "Foreword," in Structure of Lutheranism, p. viii.

[5]Elert, Structure of Lutheranism, p. 14.

Walter Hanson, the translator of Elert's Morphologie des Luthertums, has difficulty translating a number of German phrases, 'der evangelische Ansatz', in particular. There is a nuance here that Hanson's "the impact of the Gospel" apparently does not capture. Each time the phrase occurs, Hanson includes the German words right next to the English. The problem, however, is not one of technical precision nor of traditional usage. Elert acknowledges the fact that he coined the German words as a way to express the inner dynamic of Lutheranism.[6] The problem then is to coin an English counterpart. As Hanson struggles to find the appropriate words, one point emerges. The dynamic of Lutheranism cannot be reduced to a statement. The Gospel, in the structure of the Lutheran collective consciousness, is a living motivating force which produces an impact on one who participates in it. It is this dynamic which Elert sees throughout the various facets of Lutheran theology as well as in its historical movement.

> It is self-evident that for the impact of the Gospel (evangelischer Ansatz) and for theology in general, the sources at the beginning of the development flow at their purest. Here in the writings of the reformers in the confessions,--even those that were not accepted--in numerous catechisms and sermons, "classical" material altogether inexhaustible is at our disposal. Certainly here, too, the impact of the Gospel

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[6] Ibid., p. 11.

> (evangelischer Ansatz) must always be employed as the critical standard of measurement.[7]

Although it might be objected that the Gospel here is presented as a kind of norm for determining the Lutheran consciousness, Elert reminds his readers that the writings of Luther and the early confessions are simply means to express this impact of the Gospel. It becomes a norm in the sense of bringing purity to that expression, and as a means to judge its application to a new theological situation. The power of the Gospel seems to belong more to immediate experience than to rational construction. It is a norm which one knows only by its impact.

Lutherans are explicit not only with regard to the centrality of the Gospel experience, but also the fact that it cannot be simply the result of a human intuition. The primal human experience, as Elert summarizes the Lutheran tradition, is that of despair. This natural opposition between man and God cannot be bridged by man's efforts. God is, in fact, independent of human consciousness. Not only that, man's consciousness of himself is in original opposition to God, whether he knows this or not.

> Neither the submersion of oneself in one's own thinking, nor the setting-up of one's own idea of the "ethical person" can lead to any other result than opposition to God. For everything man finds in himself and

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[7]Ibid., p. 13.

> everything he sets up is sin and therefore condemned by God.[8]

This primal experience is not only natural. It is the basic to the human consciousness which is able to experience grace. The importance of grace and the need for the means of grace in the Lutheran experience springs from a clear recognition of the limitations of human consciousness. The Gospel impact does not come from within. It must be presented. Thus the means of grace, in particular the Word of God, are of crucial significance in bringing about the Gospel's impact.

Before comparing this consciousness with the one Barfield follows, a further point must be emphasized central to the meaning of the Gospel. One watchword of the Reformation is "justification by faith." In addition to the sola gratia and sola scriptura which have already been alluded to, comes the sola fides. Yet none of these commonly acknowledged "solas" make sense apart from the overriding solus Christus. Faith, grace, and scripture are never alone in the sense of being without specific content. Faith has content, a content given by God's grace through Scriptures. The three center on the impact of the Gospel.

> The Gospel accomplishes its task--so it was established--only by pointing to Christ. Christ is the content of the revelation with which faith, as faith, is concerned. In Christ, God steps out of His concealment--He becomes the "incarnate God", or as

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[8]Ibid., p. 18.

> Paul states "Jesus crucified," or what amounts to the same thing, the "proclaimed God" who does not desire the sinner's death.[9]

Thus not only is Lutheran consciousness historically grounded in the life of Jesus, it is a theology of the cross. It lives not by what makes sense, but through the revelation of God, who, as Luther says, "does everything contrary to reason."[10] It is this reality that is conveyed not through the rational mind, but through the Word. It becomes real in the life of a justified sinner. Luther and his followers never ceased to emphasize that the message of the Gospel has not accomplished its purpose until it happens pro me or pro nobis.[11] The "impact of the Gospel" as Elert shows in examples throughout Lutheran history, has and continues to be the formative thread which can be followed into all aspects of the Lutheran life.

Although Barfield has praise for Christ's role in the evolution of consciousness, it is clear that for him the more orthodox statements of Lutheran theology would be too confining. Barfield would not limit the expansive potential of human consciousness to one personal, albeit divine, relationship. And yet the points of contact are more than super-

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[9] Ibid., p. 72.

[10] Ibid., p. 73.

[11] Ibid., p. 68.

ficial. In Unancestral Voice, Barfield acknowledges the giveness of the consciousness that goes behind memory.[12] This experience of the one named "Meggid" is not under the control of Burgeon's will. There is a giveness which is described as closer to perceiving than thinking. One hates simply to equate this with the Lutheran concept of grace. But the difference, if indeed one exists, is not in kind but in content. That which is given in the sola gratia is named specifically as Christ. Barfield, however, does not name that giveness "meggid" in a sense conflicting with the Lutheran consciousness. In fact, he acknowledges that this interior word itself has been called many things, but was itself transformed by that turning point in time that is the open mystery of Golgotha.[13] Barfield elsewhere goes so far as to discuss the need for final participation in terms of participating the name of Christ.[14] Here again, one would hesitate simply to equate Barfield's sense of participation with the Lutheran consciousness of the centrality of faith. Yet Barfield does speak approvingly of the Lutheran Reformation insofar as it began with participation in Christ.[15] The concept of a participating consciousness is

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[12]Barfield, Unancestral Voice, p. 162.

[13]Ibid., p. 163.

[14]Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 159.

[15]Ibid.

one that is found in Luther himself. Luther speaks of God being everywhere; in a stone, fire, water, even a rope. Yet He does not want to be sought apart from His Word. Luther observes that it is idolatrous to look for Christ in things themselves.[16] This of course is Barfield's point in Saving the Appearances. Without implying that the two stances are synonymous, enough has been established to proceed with a comparison.

The Lutheran Polarity: Law/Gospel

The inner dynamic at work in the life of a Lutheran is commonly expressed through the relationship of law and Gospel. Luther's familiar simul justus et peccator is but one attempt to put into words that paradoxical reality involving the movement of life. Superficially this movement could be compared with the Barfield/Coleridge polarity. The law and the Gospel generate one another and are dependent on one another much in the same way that the prosaic and the poetic are. The Gospel provides the expansive dynamic, while the Law defines the limitations of existence. Yet here a comparison with Barfield is far from complete. One difference is the simple fact that there is not agreement among Lutherans as to the nature of the law/Gospel relationship.

Werner Elert's The Structure of Lutheranism was cited above in defense of a collective Lutheran consciousness

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[16]Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, p. 233.

centering around the impact of the Gospel. Elert has also written on the law/Gospel relationship. Here however, his style shifts from that of an expositor to that of a debater. His opponent, Karl Barth, stands in the Reformed tradition. As such, Barth's contention that knowledge of the Gospel must precede law could simply be ignored as being outside the mainstream of Lutheranism. However, Elert also documents divergencies within the Lutheran tradition. For Elert and, he believes, for St. Paul and Luther as well, law and Gospel stand in substantive dialectical opposition. When the law speaks, the Gospel is silent. When the Gospel speaks, the law must hold its peace.[17] This sense of opposition is gradually transformed by the subsequent theology of Lutheran Orthodoxy into a sequence or into a more or less friendly coexistence. Law and Gospel are still viewed as different, though by no means exclusive. Still later, the issue disappears. According to Elert, only a few in the 19th century, including Harnack and Walther, break through again to the original Pauline-Lutheran understanding of the divergence.[18] Although the law/Gospel relationship is a theme close to the centrality of the impact of the Gospel itself, it is a theme with variations.

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[17]Werner Elert, Law and Gospel, translated from the German by Edward H. Schroeder (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 1.

[18]Ibid., p. 2.

One name mentioned approvingly by Elert has had a great influence on the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. The man most responsible for founding this Synod, C. F. W. Walther, is perhaps best known for a collection of 39 evening lectures collected into a book on the proper distinction between law and Gospel. Here Walther defends 25 theses on the law/Gospel relationship in an informal and pastoral style. He begins by asserting that the two differ fundamentally from one another (Thesis I). And yet there is a personal dynamic in understanding this difference which Walther calls an "art" taught only "by the Holy Spirit in the school of experience" (Thesis III). Not only does the art spring from the Holy Scriptures, but without it "Scripture is and remains a sealed book" (Thesis IV). Walther then proceeds to expound the danger of simply mixing the two (Thesis V) as well as the need to "rightly divide" them (Thesis VI). This division requires that the law be preached in its full sternness and the Gospel in its full sweetness (Thesis VI). However, in applying law and Gospel, Walther encourages a sense of balance. Thesis VIII warns against preaching law to those already in terror of their sins, or Gospel to those who have no sense of sin at all. Walther then goes on to defend the qualitative difference between the two, together with the need for maintaining

them in a proper relationship.[19]

For one who is predisposed, it is possible to see many points of contact between Walther's law/Gospel relationship and Barfield's polarity. In both cases the two tend to generate one another and find their meaning in terms of the other. In both cases the two express the movement of life that springs from a basic form of consciousness. Both find application of the polarity to be an art found in the realm of life experiences. It would seem then that followers of Walther would be more inclined towards Coleridge's polarity than to the Cartesian either/or. The fact that the opposite occurs is more easily documented than explained. However, the shift does not involve the centrality of the Gospel nor the law/Gospel relationship as much as it does an understanding of the Word. Barfield grounds his theory of knowledge on the word that comes alive. His "felt change of consciousness" requires that the polarity of life be maintained in the word through which that is experienced. For the Missouri Synod, the authoritative word itself becomes more and more the grounding for an epistemology. The true Word is identified with the scriptural Word and this Word is then projected as law and Gospel. Thus it is through the law/Gospel relationship that a difference in perspective begins to become visible.

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[19]Carl F. W. Walther, The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1928), pp. 1-4.

Though Walther's law/Gospel relationship could have developed as the polarity through which the Scriptural Word must be understood, the Word in itself becomes the norm. The roots for this shift can be found in many sources, including perhaps the writings of Walther himself.[20] Whatever the source, it is through the law/Gospel theme that a difference begins to emerge, a difference that leads directly into the doctrine of the Word.

Before looking at the doctrine of the Word as it grows in the consciousness of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, it is of value to note that some Lutherans maintain the priority of a kind of law/Gospel polarity. Edmund Schlink's thorough study of the Lutheran Confessions, for example, strongly focuses on the law/Gospel dynamic. Even though he begins with Scripture and Confessions, he sees early in his discussion the working of the law and Gospel. The center of Lutheranism, he says, is not an abstract Christ. Rather, it is a Christ who preaches repentance, who judges and saves, but whose proper office is forgiving.

> It follows then that the decisive task of all dogmatic endeavor is the distinction between law and Gospel in the Word of God. Only he who correctly distinguishes law and Gospel--that is who remains a pupil

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[20]See for example, W. H. T. Dau's preface to Walther's Law and Gospel in which Dau begins by seeing in Walther the fact that God's will and Word are "never self-contradictory" though they operate towards man in two ways, the conviction of sin, and the rescue of sinners, pp. iii-v.

> in this distinction all his life--will correctly distinguish between God's Word and man's word.[21]

Although Schlink does not use the word "polarity," the priority of the law/Gospel dynamic is basic to the understanding of the Scriptural Word itself. Apart from the law/Gospel distinction the Word does not function properly.

One Lutheran who consciously uses both the word and the concept of polarity is Gerhard Ebeling. Although conservative Lutherans in the Missouri Synod never tire of pointing out the evils in philosophical existentialism which they associate with men like Ebeling,[22] he nevertheless has impressive credentials as a Luther scholar. In addition, he deals specifically with the relationship between the two areas at the heart of the present discussion: polarity and the Word. Ebeling's discussion of the thought of Luther focuses deliberately on the tension which runs through Luther's life. This, Ebeling suggests, is a way to visualize the inner dynamic of his thought.[23] This dynamic is fired from a conflict which Luther perceives within himself

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[21]Edmund Schlink, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, translated from the German by Paul Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia, Pa.: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 28.

[22]Martin Warth, "Theologies," in Evangelical Directions for the Lutheran Church, edited by Erich Kiehl and Waldo Werning. A Report of the Lutheran Congress, held August 31-September 2, 1970. Warth dismisses Ebeling as one who denies God's historical revelation (p. 18).

[23]Gerhard Ebeling, Luther: An Introduction to His

simul iustus - simul peccator, the antithesis between the old and the new man, the age of law and the age of grace.[24] Ebeling portrays the way into Luther's thought through a path highly reminiscent of the thought/thinking polarity of Coleridge and Barfield.

> The clue to (Luther's world) seems to lie in the observation that Luther's thought always contained an antithesis, tension between strongly opposed but related polarities: theology and philosophy, the letter and the Spirit, the law and the Gospel, the double use of the law, person and works, faith and love, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the world, man as a Christian and man in the world, freedom and bondage, God hidden and God revealed--to mention only the most important examples. These will be the guides that will lead us into the process of Luther's thinking.[25]

Ebeling does not limit polarity to the law/Gospel relationship, but it is clearly included.

Later Ebeling deals specifically with the kind of relationship that exists between law and Gospel. The two, he says, do not exclude one another, nor is it accurate to think of them as complementary. Rather, there exists a proper relationship in which each remains in its own place,

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Thought, translated from the German by R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 11.

[24]Ibid., p. 24.

[25]Ibid., p. 25.

the law not claiming to be Gospel and the Gospel not taking the role of the law.[26] The two cannot be abstracted by means of theological definition. They appear properly in the concrete word of preaching.

> The distinction between the law and Gospel is only the central issue of theology because it is concerned with what is the true word of Christian preaching.[27]

The concern of Christian preaching is to put into practice the distinction between law and Gospel, so that the event of salvation takes place. Only through the word, apprehended in concrete terms, does consciousness affected by the impact of the Gospel come about. Therefore, the correct understanding of the law/Gospel polarity is intimately related to the power of the Word. Through the Word one must realize that he is accountable for what leads to death and what leads to life.[28]

Once again the argument proceeds with inevitible force towards the doctrine of the Word. But now, it seems, there are two ways. One is to take a form of consciousness together with its life giving polarity into the Word. This is the path Barfield would advocate. And, as noted above, this path fits remarkably into the consciousness identified

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[26]Ibid., p. 115.

[27]Ibid., p. 117.

[28]Ibid., p. 119.

as Lutheran. A Christocentric faith fired by the polarity traditionally described by the terms law/Gospel is the proper content of the divine Word. This rephrasing of Ebeling's stance may not be acceptable to all Lutherans. However, it is a legitimate understanding of the Word in a Lutheran context. There is, however, a second way to proceed. That way begins with the Scriptural Word in particular and identifies that Word as the true, inspired, and inerrant Word of God. This second way speaks the words of the Gospel, and affirms a law/Gospel relationship. But there is a difference. To use Barfield's terminology, it begins with a form of thought rather than thinking. The Word is assumed to be objective and non-participated. As such, it falls into the categories that Barfield identifies as cut off from the life process, if not idolatrous. Those who advocate this second way, however, see themselves as defenders of the truth of the Scriptural Word. Their predisposition to literalness they portray as being in the tradition that is genuinely Lutheran. It is this second understanding of the Word that must now be presented in some detail.

Lutherans and the Literal Word

One difficulty in trying to present an historical overview of the Lutheran doctrine of the Word is the fact that an interpreter's presuppositions become apparent in what is cited. What follows is an attempt to present as fairly as possible one perspective on the history of the

Sola Scriptura in Lutheranism. It is an approach that favors an authoritative and inerrant Scriptural Word. This overview is a way to state one side of the Missouri Synod controversy--the side that eventually is adopted. By summarizing this stance, the specific arguments noted in chapter 4 will not need to be rehearsed in every detail. However, there is a more basic purpose of this survey. It is an attempt to show literal thinking in the wider context of Lutheranism. A judgment on literalness is not somehow to be equated with a judgment on the Missouri Synod. Michael Reu, for example, taught in an American Lutheran Church seminary; Robert Preus came out of the old Norwegian Synod; and J. W. Montgomery was professor of Church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. Each was selected as a representative of literal thinking as it is applied to an important era of Lutheranism. Reu has written on Luther's view of Scriptures, Preus on the 16th century, and Montgomery on current theological issues. Each defends what he sincerely believes to be orthodox Lutheran theology. Each believes that this theology is linked in an inerrant Word. Although the instance under investigation occurs in the Missouri Synod, the way of literal thinking goes beyond denominational labels and can be seen throughout the history of Lutheranism. The following survey is intended to focus attention on this way of thinking so as to identify the characteristics that make it visible.

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As Michael Reu looks at the life of Luther, he sees a total commitment to the authority of Scriptures as the foundation for Luther's theology. He further sees this commitment applied with consistency from a very early point. Although Luther's early years do not provide much opportunity for a study of the Bible, he does receive his own Latin Bible in 1505, begins the study of Hebrew in 1506, and Greek in 1511.[29] In 1513 when Luther begins his lectures on the Psalms he operates with the traditional fourfold sense of Scripture. But after 1519 it is clear that the superiority of the sensus literalis plays a determinative role in his understanding of the text. Scripture has but one meaning even though in practical explanations Luther continues to pay tribute to the allegorical sense.

He now declares in his writing against Emser,

> Scripture shall not have a double meaning but shall retain the one that accords with the meaning by the words,

and again,

> The Holy Ghost is the most simple author and speaker in heaven and earth, therefore, His words cannot have more than one, the most simple meaning.

In his Christmas postil of 1522, he even writes,

> If we concede that Scripture has more than on sense, it loses its fighting force.[30]

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[29]Michael J. Reu, Luther and the Scriptures (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1944), pp. 7-9.

[30]Ibid., p. 9.

In this manner Reu collects citations from Luther which focus on a literal authoritative text. He portrays Luther as seeking to avoid contradicting passages, but when in doubt of their harmony trusting the unity of understanding that comes through Christ.[31] Luther then has brought a new understanding to the content of Scripture that in contradiction to the Middle Ages beams, for him, the message of law and Gospel with its heartin Christ, the crucified and risen Lord.[32] Luther's emphasis on the total authority of Scriptures is expressed most clearly in the context of the competing authority of Church or Pope. After his disputation with Eck, 1519, Luther comes to realize that the fallibility of the Church requires that the sole and decisive norm be found elsewhere. From that point on he identified the norm with Scripture as the Word of God.[33] Lest there be any doubt as to the reality of Luther's commitment, his well-known response at the Diet of Worms removes all questions.

> Unless I am convinced by the testimony from Scripture or evident reason (convictus testimoniis Scripturae aut ratione evident)--for I believe neither in the Pope nor the Councils alone, since it is established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves--I am conquered

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[31] Ibid., p. 10.

[32] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[33] Ibid., pp. 22-23.

> by the writings (i.e., passages from Scripture) cited by me and my conscience is captive to the Word of God; recant I will not and can not, since it is neither safe nor honest to do ought against conscience.[33]

Here Reu observes that the sola scriptura is established once and for all. He also points out that the ratio of "evident reason" is not simply the capacity to think but to make logically correct deductions from the testimony of Scripture. Although Reu acknowledges Luther's battle against Aristotelian logic, he explains that the point at issue is the authority of reason, not the use of reason to draw from the authority of Scripture.[34]

Reu continues by showing the inadequacy of those arguments commonly put forth to prove Luther's open attitude towards Scriptural authority. He begins with Luther's oft-quoted comment on the letter of James. Here Reu brings to the readers' attention the full context of the quotation. James is not called a letter of straw in and of itself. Rather, when compared with John and Paul and Peter, James is "strawy" in that he speaks so little of Christ and his redeeming work.[35] Reu adds that Luther has grave doubts

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[33]Ibid., p. 28. Note Reu's parenthetical interpretation that the "writings" refer exclusively to the written scriptures which, by implication is the meaning of "Word of God."

[34]Ibid., p. 31.

[35]Ibid., p. 45.

whether James belongs in the canon at all. In the completed Bible of 1534, James, together with Hebrews, Jude and Revelation, are indexed in the same way as the Old Testament apocryphal books.[36] Since, as Reu points out later, Luther never admits any error in the canonical scripture the whole controversy with regard to the letter of James falls inasmuch as it is not included in Luther's canon.

Reu continues by dealing with four passages in which Luther seems to admit that there are errors in Scripture. He conclues, rather predictably, that none of the four prove that point. For example, in speaking of the errors made by the prophets, Luther's words can be explained as referring to errors in day to day prophecy, not errors in their writings.[37] In a similar fashion, Reu appeals to the pure disordliness of Moses, and some of the prophets,[38] and excuses Matthew, who "does not pay much attention to the order, as would be fitting for a preacher."[39] When faced with a contradiction he cannot reconcile, Reu gives Luther one final way out.

> He (Luther) dismisses the matter if he cannot prove it conclusively, but his

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[36]Ibid., p. 45.

[37]Ibid., p. 66.

[38]Ibid., pp. 76-77.

[39]Ibid., p. 80.

> inability to do so neither commits him to the opinion that these passages really contain error, nor is his faith in salvation thereby imperiled.[40]

Not only does Reu present Luther as having an unflinching faith in the power of Scripture to present an errorless guide to salvation, he also tries to demonstrate Luther's belief that even those passages that have nothing to do with faith are accurate. For example, in his exposition of Genesis 11:27-28, Luther admits that Terah was 70 when he begat Abraham, and that Abraham is 75 when Terah dies. However, this total of 145 years does not fit the Biblical statement that Terah died at the age of 205. Here Luther acknowledges his ignorance, but sees no problem for God to cause 60 years to be lost from Abraham's life.[41] It is this total commitment to the truth of Scripture that leads Luther to remark that the heliocentric theory of Copernicus is not possible in view of the fact that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, not the earth.[42] Thus, in Reu's eyes, Luther believes in the absolute inerrancy and truth that Scripture is in agreement with itself. However, as Reu adds, Luther believes that this lack of contradiction is found only in the original drafts,[43] not in the trans-

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[40]Ibid., p. 90.

[41]Ibid., p. 93.

[42]Ibid., p. 102.

[43]Ibid., p. 103.

mitted text.

Reu sees no difficulty in the fact that Luther often finds the transmitted text to be erroneous and even ventures corrections of his own.[44] He changes traditional verse divisions, criticizes the reliability of the superscriptions in the Psalms, and deviates from the traditional punctuation of the Hebrew text.[45] Luther, as Reu explains, sees the authoritative text with his eyes open. He specifically discounts a dictated text for he regards the Biblical authors as independent instruments of the Spirit who speak their own faith and thoughts. Luther also has no trouble drawing conclusions as to the temperament of the authors. Joel is gracious and gentle, Amos violent, Jeremiah too censurious, and Paul moved more violently that he is able to capture in words.[46] To Reu, Luther has a thoroughly worked out view of Scriptures that accepts the inerrancy of the text together with the realization that the Holy Spirit inspired these words through real people. The fact that Luther appears not to be a systematic thinker concerned about working out his position does not bother Reu any more than it did Karl Holl who observes that this comment can simply be a cloak to cover the laziness that does not try to understand Luther's

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[44] Ibid., p. 102.

[45] Ibid., pp. 104-105.

[46] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

apparently contradictory statements.[47] Thus Reu documents his perspective on Luther's attitude towards the Word. For Reu, it is clear that Luther's theology is grounded on a verbally inspired inerrant Bible.

Robert Preus' book, The Inspiration of Scripture, attempts to justify the same conclusion through an analysis of the 17th century Lutheran dogmaticians. In his introduction, Preus explains that there are two reasons behind his investigation. The first is the influence which the 17th century view of inspiration continues to have. The second is that the doctrine of inspiration seems to be the chief point at which these dogmaticians are remembered and judged. And this judgment, Preus observes, is essentially a negative one. He believes that no other era in Church history is treated with less sympathy than 17th century Lutheran orthodoxy. And why?

> . . . more than anywhere else, I believe, it is to be found in their rigid adherence to the Lutheran principle of sola scriptura and in their doctrine of verbal inspiration, tenets which are not cherished by the majority of modern theologians and historians.[48]

Yet, their consistent adherence to the sola scriptura principle is the key which unlocks the door to a true under-

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[47] Ibid., p. 114.

[48] Robert Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), p. vi.

standing of their theology.[49] As to the source for this principle, some, including the Missouri Synod theologian Francis Pieper, feel that it is essentially drawn from Scripture and that it agrees with Luther's own stance.[50] Doubtless, these dogmaticians stand in the Lutheran tradition by stressing the Christocentricity of all the books of the Bible.[51] What distinguishes them, however, is the scholastic method that they employ. Syllogistic arguments, Aristotelian terminology, precise method, and close distinctions are commonly used by these dogmaticians. Yet, in Preus' view, they do not sacrifice their theology to their method. Preus admits that there are dangers in applying the method. When the mysteria fidei are forced to fit this structure, serious inconsistencies can result. However, he adds, the method can also add clarity.

Preus devotes his first chapter to the epistemological nature of Scripture. Revealed theology, he says, has to be drawn only from the revealed and written Word of God. Otherwise, theology is false as is Christ Himself. The Word must be the norm for portraying Christ. Thus, Scripture is the principium cognoscendi of theology.[52] This is not to say

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[49] Ibid., p. ix.

[50] Ibid., p. x.

[51] Ibid., p. xv.

[52] Ibid., p. 1.

that Scripture is the content of theology. Theology has its being from God. Yet it is through Scripture that God is known and understood.[53] Although reason can be used as a means for doing theology, it is never its source.[54] Preus points out that the 17th century Lutheran scholastics have high regard for reason, believing that reason is necessary for understanding. God's truth is not contrary to reason, even though it may be above reason.[55] Using the style and terminology of a carefully reasoned theology, Preus then presents an argument from John Gerhard to make an important distinction. For Gerhard, Scripture is the Word of God reduced to writing.[56] There is no difference between Scripture and God's Word.

> The materia ex qua of Scripture is the letters, syllables, words and phrases which go together to constitute Scripture. . . . the materia circa quam of Scripture is specifically the doctrines and precepts contained in the Bible and in general everything which is contained in Scripture. The forma is either external or internal. The external forma is the idiom and style of writing. The internal forma of Scripture is the inspired meaning, the thoughts of the divine mind concerning divine mysteries. . . .[57]

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[53]Ibid., p. 5.

[54]Ibid., p. 9.

[55]Ibid., p. 10.

[56]Ibid., p. 13.

[57]Ibid., p. 14.

It is this inspired forma which constitues Scripture and makes it what it is, namely, the Word of God. The dogmaticians of course are well aware that in John 1, Christ is called the Word of God. By insisting on Scripture as the Word, they oppose those like the Schwenkfeldians who said, properly speaking, only Christ could be called this Word. In reply, the Lutheran scholastics simply observe that the word "word" can have more than one sense.[58]

These early Lutherans knew well that the Augsburg Confession of 1530 has no doctrine of inspiration. Yet, Preus argues, there is no reason to object to the assumption that such a doctrine is simply presupposed.[59] With such an assumption, it follows naturally that this inspiration would have to be total, for to deny inspiration to one verse the authority and infallibility of Scripture would fall.[60] If one word could be found that was not inspired it could no longer be said that all Scripture is inspired by God, 2 Timothy 3:16.[61] Here again, however, Preus adds the priviso that this complete form of inspiration is only properly assigned to the original manuscripts.[62] These

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[58]Ibid., p. 22.

[59]Ibid., p. 26.

[60]Ibid., p. 39.

[61]Ibid., p. 42.

[62]Ibid., p. 48.

manuscripts could, in the eyes of these dogmaticians, be described as coming through the dictation of God,[63] although in some way they believed these writers to be more than blind and characterless.[64] The result is a body of writing that is fully inerrant, always the same, and without contradiction. Scriptures are infallible and can never be called into doubt for they were written for our certainty.[65] Support for this view, the early dogmaticians believed, comes as an a priori, for Scriptures induces certainty of itself (autopistos). This certainty need not be supported by any additional investigations and proofs.[66] And yet the extent of Scriptural infallability produces conclusions which even Preus has to admit go too far. Because Lutherans could not conceive of words without vowels, they found it necessary to assume the inspiration of vowel points in the original Hebrew text.[67] This unwarranted conclusion, Preus observes, was aided and abetted by a background in and adherence to an Aristotelian philosophy of language.[68]

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[63] Ibid., p. 53.

[64] Ibid., p. 74.

[65] Ibid., p. 77.

[66] Ibid., p. 89.

[67] Ibid., p. 140.

[68] Ibid., p. 146.

In defense of the polemical style of their approach, Preus urges the reader to remember that these Lutheran systematicians were writing primarily against the Jesuits. To accuse them of being hidebound dogmaticians is to misjudge their intention and to ignore a good many exegetical works which they produced.[69] Also to divorce their doctrine of the Word from their other teachings might present a static picture that misses the basic soteriological context. Their very methodology drives them to inconsistencies, for example, with regard to the fact that Scriptures are verbally dictated, and yet each writer actively cooperates in the writings.[70] Preus observes that this contradiction is nothing more than it appears on the surface; namely, a contradiction between their theology and their method.[71] Certainly they could not place their method before their faith. Theirs is not an idolatry of the Word, or as Dorner has accused them, "a deification of the Holy Scriptures."[72] To this strong criticism the dogmaticians would reply that they do not attribute power to Scriptures independently. That, indeed, would be idolatry. Rather, the power of the

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[69]Ibid., p. 193.

[70]Ibid., pp. 196-197.

[71]Ibid., p. 198.

[72]Ibid., p. 205.

Scriptural Word comes by virtue of the divine communication and the union of the Holy Spirit with the Word. Preus observes that those who criticize the fact that the form of Scriptures is the mind of God, must also criticize the theology of the Word. If Scripture is the Word of God, the divine nature of the form follows. Yet the spirit of Lutheran orthodoxy does not replace the refrain of "justification by faith" with the Scripture principle. The dogmaticians, in Preus' eyes, teach that it is with the article on justification that the Church stands or falls.[73] Their aim is to remain faithful to the principles and theology of the Reformation. And, in Preus' judgment, they succeeded admirably.

One final series of citations will bring the historical sequence to the present. J. W. Montgomery's Crisis in Lutheran Theology includes several articles which deal with the present cultural and philosophical context. Here, again, his views represent those who succeed in winning the Missouri Synod controversy. In his introduction, Montgomery quotes with approval the stance of Charles Porterfield Krauth.

> If we maintian the pure Word inflexibly at every cost . . . we shall conquer. . . through the Word: but to compromise on a single point, is to lose all and to

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[73] Ibid., p. 209.

be lost.[74]

From the outset it is clear that Montgomery feels himself to be in a kind of war. For him, every era has been faced with a particular issue. The one he sees today is "the great epistemological question in Christian dogmatics."[75] It is a question of the authority at the foundation of knowledge. Thus, for a Christian the war requires a defense of an inerrant Bible. The Bible, to his mind, cannot be inspired without absolute inerrancy. And so the battleground is the Bible; the good side being those who defend the fact that it is without errors, the bad being the scientific and historic critics who permit factual contradictions to stand.[76]

The defense of an inerrant Bible has been vocally maintained throughout the Missouri Synod tradition.[77] Montgomery, however, sees a particular need to reemphasize

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[74]John Warwick Montgomery, Crisis in Lutheran Theology: The Validity and Relevance of Historic Lutheranism vs. Its Contemporary Rivals (Minneapolis, Mn.: Bethany Fellowship Inc., 1967), p.8.

[75]Ibid., pp. 15-16.

[76]Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[77]See, for example, William F. Arndt's Does the Bible Contradict Itself? (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1951). This popular pamphlet, first published in 1926, deals with specific Scriptural contradictions with the intention of finding ways to reconcile each one.

this stance, especially in terms of the "subjectivity" in contemporary philosophy. He is especially wary of those who tend to portray faith in personal as opposed to propositional terms.

> Such (personal) terminology and conceptual content point unmistakably to the existentialist movement (italics his) in modern philosophy, which stemming from Kierkegaard, has affirmed that "truth" is "subjectivity" and that "existence," as manifested in personal relationships, precedes and surpasses in quality "essence," i.e., formal, propositional assertions or descriptions concerning reality.[78]

Although Montgomery finds existentialism particularly distasteful, there are philosophical stances on the contemporary science with which he feels much more at ease. He speaks positively with regard to the analytic philosophies of A. J. Ayer and Ludwig Wittgenstein, and feels that they have "inflicted blistering criticism" on existentialism so that contemporary thought is moving away from it.

> The importance of the analytic approach to questions of truth and fasity cannot be overestimated. As a result of its application, vast areas of philosophical speculation and argument have been shown to lie in a never-never land of meaninglessness--a land where discussion could continue forever without any possibility of arriving at truth or falsity.[79]

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[78] Montgomery, Crisis in Lutheran Theology..., p. 24.

[79] Ibid., p. 27. See also footnote 30 which proclaims the verifiability principle as the best available road map through a forest of truth claims.

It is easy to move then into a position where the factuality of the resurrection becomes the only valid way to speak of the truth of this occurrence. Either it is historie or it is meaningless. No middle ground exists.[80]

From this standpoint, Montgomery then proceeds to judge the contemporary scene of Lutheran hermeneutics, beginning with Bultmann, and including the new hermeneutics of Ebeling and Fuchs. In general, he finds those approaches that assume an interrelationship between interpreter and text to lead to a subjective relativism that destroys the propositional validity of the basic Word. Since God's revelation can never be equated with the text itself, hermeneutical affirmations can be paradoxical and relativism will run rampant.

> In brief, for orthodox Protestantism, the Bible has stood as an umblemished historical revelation, objectively distinguishable from its interpreters, who in order to understand it must allow it to interpret itself apart from the existential orientations reflected in church tradition or in the mind-set of the exegete; but for the 20th century hermeneutics, the Bible as a fallible witness to revelation, cannot be qualitatively distinguished from its interpreters, past or present, and to understand it we must recognize the relativistic dialectic that connects us as interpreters with the text we endeavor to interpret.[81]

Montgomery goes on to state that he does not deny the importance of life experience in the role of interpretations. He

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[80]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

[81]Ibid., p. 59.

agrees that Luther, for example, made many Christological interpretations and used the distinction between law and Gospel. But this usage of the text does not deny his prior faith in an objective perspicuous text of the infallible Scripture.[82] It is the Schwärmer who perverts the Word by refusing to stand under its simple literal truth.[83] In short, the hermeneutic of Luther and the Lutheran tradition is its insistence that the sensus literalis sive historicus . . . solus tota est fidei et theologiae Christianae substantia.[84] Montgomery concludes that a non-literal hermeneutic makes a farce of language, promotes ambiguity, confusion, and perhaps even deception in the Church.[85] If Church history teaches anything it is the fact that seemingly minute problems of biblical hermeneutics never remain minute. The historicity of Jonah may seem insignificant. But it is a short distance from Jonah to the resurrection. Scripture is a seamless garment. When the threads are unraveled at one place soon the entire fabric gives way. Vagueness in interpretation cannot help but lead to vagueness in doctrine.[86]

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[82] Ibid., p. 63.

[83] Ibid., p. 68.

[84] Ibid., p. 75, quoted from Luther Weimar Ausgabe, 14,560.

[85] Ibid., p. 76.

[86] Ibid., p. 76.

Montgomery continues with a listing of particular points of Biblical interpretation and the two views expressed in Lutheran circles. One example from the list treats the factuality of the Genesis accounts. As Montgomery presents it, position A, (moderate), takes into consideration parallel Near Eastern myths, and considers historical only those portions of the Biblical account that are different. Further, the stories of the Fall and the Flood can be understood in a symbolical sense whose purpose is to teach the Biblical theme of law and Gospel. Position B, (conservative), on the other hand, is convinced that the factuality of Genesis is crucial and that the symbolic understanding of position A undermines not only the interpretation of Genesis but the entire Bible.[87] Montgomery then makes a similar evaluation of the Jonah story.[88] This is followed by the two positions Montgomery sees with regard to the need for the law in the Christian life (the third use of the law). Here position A argues that the function of the law is to show sin, while position B insists that the third use of the law is confessional (Formula of Concord, Article VI), and must be retained especially now in this time of lawlessness and situation ethics.[89] Other points dealt with in similar

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[87]Ibid., pp. 87-89.

[88]Ibid., p. 90.

[89]Ibid., pp. 94-95.

style include the authorship of particular books of the Bible, the person and work of Christ (miracles), and immorality and the resurrection. All of these, Montgomery concludes, drive us to the doctrine of Holy Scripture.[90] In general, position A sets personal experience above the God-given law of contradiction, thereby permitting the Bible to pass into logical non-sensicality.[91] The subjective approach raises personal-existential truth above factual truth. Position B on the other hand accepts a passage of Scripture as true in its natural sense (sensus literalis) unless the context of the passage dictates otherwise.[92] The prime article of faith applicable to the hermeneutic task is the one Christ had; that of utter trust in Scriptures. Thus, Montgomery summarizes, Scriptures cannot be erroneous or contradictory in fulfilling their natural intent.[93] For God to reveal through error or contradiction is in itself a contradiction in terms. And from a contradition, any conclusion can follow. Those who assert the existence of errors must have some standard to determine what they are. This standard would have to come then from outside the Word.[94]

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[90] Ibid., p. 95

[91] Ibid., p. 102.

[92] Ibid., p. 103.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., p. 121.

Hence the only acceptable position is one that holds to an inerrant text.

Evaluation

Barfield's stance in general, and specifically his essay on the meaning of the word "literal," provides a way to see what is happening to the Lutheran concept of the Word. Briefly stated, the truth of the Word has been literalized. And, as Barfield observes, the literal meaning of a word, even an inspired Scriptural Word, is not its "true" meaning. The literal sense is the end product of a word which in its original state included metaphorical and figurative overtones. The literal in itself is not untrue. However, when the literal is consciously divorced from the metaphorical, then a life-giving polarity is lost. A truth that is not participated is fossilized. In religious terms, it becomes an idol.

Obviously, such generalizations do not do full justice to the doctrine of the Word as it has been presented through the works cited in the above survey. Literalness itself is not always named as the basis of final appeal. And when it is, it is Luther himself who is being quoted.[95] One of Luther's contributions to the history of hermeneutics is a return to the natural or "literal" meaning of the scriptural text. However, an appeal to Luther is one that can be easily

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[95]See Montgomery's comments cited on page 111 of this paper.

misleading. Luther himself is a Medieval man of the kind Barfield describes in Saving the Appearances.[96] A case can be made for the fact that Luther does not associate literalness with the objectivising fostered through the Enlightenment. In fact, Luther's "literal" understanding of the scriptural text, especially that of the Old Testament, is far from the plain surface meaning of the words themselves. Luther sees the Old Testament as the cradle of Christ and reads this faith into the "literal meaning of the words.[97]

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[96]See the citation above on page 61 of this paper.

[97]See Gerhard Ebeling's study of the source of Luther's hermeneutic in "Die Anfänge von Luthers Hermeneutik," in Zeltschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1951, pp. 172-230. Here Ebeling notes the relationship between letter and spirit in the works of Augustine as well as St. Paul's dictum in 2 Corinthians 3:6. that the letter kills but the Spirit gives live. This Luther knew in addition to Faber Stapulensis' distinction between the sensus literalis historicus and a sensus literalis propheticus, p. 184. In Luther's lectures on the Psalms, Ebeling observes a use of the sensus literalis propheticus which Luther clearly believed to be the "true" meaning of the words. Seeing the word through the letter and the Spirit, the law and the Gospel, is in Ebeling's view, the source from which Luther made his "literal" interpretations, p. 186. Ebeling also notes that the mystical tradition played a role in Luther's understanding of basic reality as well. This point is discussed in some detail by Bengt Hoffman whose study of Luther and the Mystics (Minneapolis, Mn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), fills a gap that has largely been ignored in Luther studies today. Hoffman's thesis is that ". . .Luther's faith-consciousness was significantly molded by mystical experience and that Western dependence on rationalism has obscured or eclipsed this mystical insight" (p. 18). It is this experiential understanding of the Word which, according to Hoffman, the 17th century dogmatists did not understand (p. 26). He goes on to identify Francis Peiper, a formative theologican of doctrine as it is practiced in the Missouri Synod, to be a prime example of "repristination theology" that simply omits Luther's mystic sensitivities (p. 33). In summary, Hoffman declares that this repristination

Thus, quoting Luther does not automatically settle the issue. In fact, further reflection on the way Luther deals with the Word tends to bear out the contention that Luther sees this Word through his Christ-centered faith and applies it through a law/Gospel polarity. The word that is firm and unshakable (law, "prosaic") is always in balance with the word that gives life (Gospel, "poetic").

Through Barfield's eyes it is easy to see how this relationship can be broken or limited to the prosaic pole of literalness. From the perspective of the literal there is no need for anything more. A literal mind can even take the words that create a felt change of consciousness, and literalize them. The poetic is effectively turned into prose, Gospel into law, metaphor into literalness. Because this mind-set uses the words of the Gospel, it is difficult to identify. However, there are clues. Once it is seen that the "true" cannot be encompassed by the literal, then the structure of a literalistic epistemology falls and its errors are exposed.

Basically there are two clues which point towards the working of a literal consciousness. The first is a reliance on thought divorced from thinking. Here one sees appeals to

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theology in the Lutheran tradition "is dependent on a method of ratiocination which tends to render the biblical message as objective truth, objective in the sense that they are considered objects to be accepted on the level of the intellect, not on the level of consciousness" (p. 35).

that which is objective. Truth is equated with the factual, historical, and of course, literal. The second clue is a loss of polarity. The literal consciousness is based on the law of non-contradiction. By its very nature it defines in order to exclude. Following these two clues through the historical perspective of Lutheranism described by Reu, Preus, and Montgomery reveals particular points at which the forces of literalness are clearly at work. By observing these points, the specific clash which precipitates the division of the Missouri Synod can be more clearly seen and judged.

Michael Reu, for example, is bound by a sense of consistency which he feels must be defended at all costs. Behind his appeal to Luther's sensus literalis is a faith that the literal cannot contradict itself. As a result he is forced to prove that such seeming contraditions in Scripture must in fact be reconciled. The lengths to which this prior faith in the law of non-contradiction take him have been amply documented. His reliance on the objectivity of this consistent truth becomes visible through repeated emphases on an authoritative inspired text. He takes pains to argue for Luther's acquaintance with that text at an early stage of his life. He implies that Luther's appeal for the Word of God is to be understood as the written Word. He dismisses those times when Luther critically evaluates the text either by attributing inerrancy only to the original manuscripts which

are unavailable, or by arguing that such comments are about books (such as James) not in Luther's canon. Such arguments are only necessary to one whose sense of literalness is founded on the law of non-contradiction and who objectivizes the written Scriptures as truth.

Despite the fact that Preus' book deals with the period of Lutheran orthodoxy, the rationalizing that one might expect is not easily criticized. Preus, and presumably the dogmaticians themselves, are careful to distinguish between their method and the mystery of the theology to which the method is applied. Further, they refuse to be cast into a position of deifying Scriptures. They distinguish between an independent, idolatrous text, and an inspired Word. Yet this great care for definition and distinction betrays an essentially prosaic attitude towards the meaning of the divine text. In addition, Preus is clearly in sympathy with this 17th century adherence to the sola scriptura. Although he pays lip service to the Christological content of these books and does not confuse the mystery of theology with the scholastic method, there is a clearly implied objectivity to the text itself. It is through Scripture that God is known. It follows then that this divine content cannot be separated from the form. As such, it also follows that all Scripture is inspired. Although Preus does not carry this progressive argument down to the Hebrew vowel points, his understanding of the systematician's craft is plainly carried out at a

level where Aristotelian logic applies. The truth of the Scriptural Word is one that can be amplified through the reasoning process. Once again then the law of non-contradiction tends to fix the Word at the level of the literal.

Through the arguments of J. W. Montgomery, preconceptions concerning the nature of the Word are most visible. He virtually binds God himself to the law of non-contradiction and naturally assumes the validity of this law at the human level as well. He clearly favors the literal, the objective, and the factual thereby dismissing the subjective and paradoxical to the realm of meaninglessness. Finally, he distinguishes in order to divide. Montgomery possesses the mind-set that Barfield would judge most harshly. The fact that he does it self-consciously and openly, not to mention consistently and objectively, leads to a need for a different kind of evaluation -- an evaluation that not only provides a means to see a literal mind but to judge it.

Summary

The first step has now been taken to compare and contrast the world of Owen Barfield, and that of traditional Lutheranism. Though the two are remarkably compatible in terms of a central consciousness coupled with a life-giving polarity, there is a divergence within Lutheranism itself as this polarity is related to the Scriptural Word. Here Barfield is of help in locating the nature of this divergence, both in a theological and a literary sense.

Theologically he has identifeid the idolatry of an objectivized consciousness which, as he argues, permeates the Western Post-Enlightenment culture. Lutherans, whose roots are found in the Medieval world, are torn between the cultural need to objectivize their consciousness of truth, and their desire to remain failthful to the original spirit of the movement. Barfield has helped to sort out this dilemma not only through his portrayal of consciousness with which we live but also through his insights into the true nature of the literal. His literary or philological arguments shake the very foundations of those who equate the literal with the true.

By applying Barfield's judgment to those who represent one perspective on the nature of Luther and Lutheranism, specific arguments emerge. They are arguments based either on an objective, historical, and factual truth, or are closely tied to its corollary, the law of non-contradiction. A literal mind then can be identified through a particular style of argument (distinguish in order to divide) and through appeals to objectivity (fact and history). However, the existence of a literal consciousness simply underscores part of Barfield's judgment. Next it is necessary to see whether there is indeed a morality inbedded in the stance itself. To explore this possibility we return to the specific instance and seek to identify the kind of interaction a literal consciousness causes.

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CHAPTER IV

THE MOVEMENT OF A LITERAL CONSCIOUSNESS

As shown above, it is possible to identify a literal consciousness in the history of Lutheranism. The characteristics of an objectivized word and a loss of polarity are evident in those who appeal to that which is externally factual or to an exclusive either/or. It is difficult, however, to make judgments on this form of consciousness from within a culture that generally accepts it. Though this difficulty cannot be completely overcome there is something about the clash of perspectives in the Missouri Synod controversy that tends to expose the essential morality of a literal consciousness. Neither side is completely free from literalness. Yet the tenacity and consistency with which the Synodical administration defines and applies this stance makes the conflict a kind of paradigm. It is a model that opens up the nature of a literal consciousness as it interacts with one that might descriptively be called less literal. Through this model, certain characteristics inherent to the morality of literalness surface.

Although Barfield calls literalness a besetting sin, he does not expand on the content of that sin. However,

throughout his writings he gives hints as to its nature. His concern that C. S. Lewis is taking position "not his own" exemplifies Barfield's judgment that one who makes his thoughts conform to the process of rational thinking, divorces himself from his thought. This separation between thought and thinker is generally identified with the judgmental term, hypocrisy. A further element of this specific judgment is linked to a cycle which Barfield describes in History in English Words. As any moral quality gains respect, that respect brings with it material benefits. Weaker brethern affect the qualities to gain the benefits, and hypocrisy grows.[1] Morality then is not a specific position. Morality is the preservation of a participatory consciousness. But preserving the polarity in such a consciousness is exactly what the literalist finds difficult. For him truth is as divisive as the Cartesian either/or. Thus Barfield might predict that in a conflict, the literal consciousness would seek to define objective truth in order to separate. As this position gains strength, weaker brethern would be attracted to its practical and material benefits. By nature a literalist is especially vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy, for his life is guided by positions in which he need not participate. It is especially in this sense that the conflict in the Missouri Synod exposes the moral nature of a literal consciousness.

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[1] See page 30 above.

The Nature of a Literal Consciousness

Of all the documents which are involved in the flurry of papers circulated during the Missouri Synod controversy, none is of greater importance than A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles, (A Statement). This document expresses the theological stance in the investigation of the teachings of professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. Although Synodical President, J. A. O. Preus disclaims the idea that his document is "a new standard of orthodoxy," [2] it is in fact used to evaluate specific teachings. Since it is this evaluation that begins a series of events leading to the walk-out of students and faculty, A Statement deserves careful evaluation.

A Statement

A Statement[3] is included in the official record of the Seminary investigation made public in President Preus' report of September 1, 1972 (henceforth called the Blue Book). Though A Statement comprises a little more than three pages, nearly half of it concerns teachings related to Holy Scripture. There is little doubt but that the nature of this Word is at the center of the controversy. Other points at issue include

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[2] J. A. O. Preus, Report of the Synodical President Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (St. Louis, Mo.: 1972) (commonly called the Blue Book), p. 152.

[3] See Appendix.

the uniqueness of salvation through Christ alone (Article I), the specific content to the need to verbalize faith accurately (Article III), the law and Gospel (Article II), the historicity of Adam and Eve and the reality of original sin (Article V), and the binding quality of the Lutheran confessions (Article VI). Even this listing of topics indicates a view of theology that is objectivized. Historicity, literal clarity, and the binding authority of words are themes that grow out of the literal consciousness. It is not surprising then to find the bulk of A Statement relating to the authoritative and literal understanding of an objective Scriptural Word.

Article IV, titled "Holy Scripture," is subdivided into nine sections. The first is on the inspiration of Scripture. Based on the assertion that the Holy Scriptures are inspired, it is concluded that there is a qualitative difference between the witness of Scripture and the witness of every other form of human expression. This statement alone might seem to point in the direction of a metaphorical significance to the Word that could lead to that which Barfield calls a "felt change of consciousness." But despite A Statement's idealizing of the Scriptural Word, the purpose is not to insure its quality as a religious symbol, but rather to safeguard its meaning within the realm of the literal. Again and again the message of A Statement is that inspiration is the guarantee that the events recorded are historical and

factual. For example, the article continues by stating that Scripture presents facts rather than imaginative additions which had their origin in the early Christian community (IV, A.5). Although the next point starts off by emphasizing that the purpose for Scripture "is to make men wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ," it concludes by adding that the "soteriological purpose of Scripture in no sense permits us to call into question or deny the historicity or factuality of matters recorded in the Bible" (IV, B). Specifically, then, A Statement warns against questioning whether Adam and Eve were historical individuals, whether Jesus was born of a virgin, whether Jesus performed miracles, and whether the resurrection actually involved the return to life of His dead body (IV, B.4). This desire to insure the truth of the miraculous by literalizing it, is somewhat tempered by what seems to be a metaphorical understanding of the Old Testament as that Word which bears witness to Jesus Christ (IV, B.2). Yet as section H clarifies, this is not intended to be a metaphorical understanding at all. When an Old Testament prophet speaks in Messianic terms this must be understood as being genuinely predictive. The presence of Christ in the Old Testament Word is thus literalized as well.

In all fairness it must be added that the framers of A Statement recognize that there are other forms of speech besides the literal. However, there is an overriding

urgency to limit the significance of such words. The identification of literary forms (IV, F.9) is discouraged and the implication that a Biblical author might accommodate his words to erroneous notions of the day is rejected (IV, F.4). Much concern is directed against historical methods of biblical interpretation. Although A Statement acknowledges the historical nature of the Scriptural text, it affirms that a Christian interpreter cannot adopt uncritically the presuppositions of a secular historian (IV, I). The reason given is the fact that this would preclude any interpretation that includes intervention by God (IV, I.2). Here again it sounds as if a deeper understanding of the divine Word is intended. And yet, as section I on historical methods proceeds, it becomes clear that just the opposite is the result. The divine Word is preserved in A Statement by making sure that such concepts as angels, and a personal devil are understood literally (IV, I.4). Thus the metaphorical nature of words is barely acknowledged, and when it is the result is either to literalize it or to disregard its relative importance.

Although the word "literal" is not sanctified by A Statement, its counterparts are. The so-called qualitative difference in the Sacred Word is preserved by bringing the divine into the realm of the factual, historical, and noncontradictory. A Statement then effectively deifies the literal, and thereby loses any genuine polarity. The appro-

priateness in applying Barfield's judgment in idolatry in language is demonstrated through this literalizing of the sacred.

The Issue is Engaged: Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation

There are of course many defenses and critiques of A Statement. These are difficult to summarize because both sides constantly claim that their position is being misrepresented. Also the issues are not always adequately clarified. There is, however, one report which deserves special notice. Although not circulated until February of 1976, it summarizes the areas of debate and is a way to see four years of argument in a brief form. The report begins significantly with an acknowledgement that there is something at work in the controversy that is never adequately expressed.

> One of the disappointments experienced by the committee is that it did not arrive at a point where either caucus could express the other's point of view to the complete satisfaction of the other caucus.[4]

The chairman, however, goes on to express his belief that with more time such an agreement could have been reached. Whether this judgment is accurate, it is much more significant that despite the length of the controversy and the energy

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[4]Arnold G. Kuntz, Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, February 1976), p. iii, hereafter referred to as the ACDC Report.

expended on it, even at the end the two sides could not formulate the position of the other. Thus there appears to be something lying behind the issues, something that is not adequately brought to light. Of the four topics discussed in the ACDC Report, it is interesting that the nature of the Word is not one. Perhaps both sides honestly believed that this was not an issue. To some extent they do in fact share an understanding based on the priority of the literal. And yet, as the two positions are placed side by side there is a difference between their respective understandings of the Word. The moderate position tends in a direction that would preserve a sense of polarity. The conservative position distinguishes in order to divide. As the two interact, this moral dimension becomes increasingly evident.

In their final proposals the Moderates note this difference in approach. They suggest that the two sides seem motivated by cross purposes. For the Moderates, the process of defining and clarifying is primarily aimed at the goal of expressing the unity that is shared. The Conservatives, on the other hand, are more oriented towards clarifying the disunity.[5] Given the nature of a literal consciousness, this difference is not surprising. Nor is it surprising to see the format through which they believe concensus could be achieved. Since both sides view their differences and the issues on the literal level, it seems logical that a

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[5]ACDC Report, p. 146.

a position paper could bring about reconciliation. They agree to deal with four issues: 1) Inspiration and Inerrancy; 2) Gospel and Scripture; 3) Historical Critical Method; and 4) Third Use of the Law. Each topic is in turn analyzed through a position paper prepared respectively by the Moderate and Conservative caucuses. These then are followed by responses of each to the other. If the literal consciousness of the Moderates had not varied from that of the Conservatives, the method would likely have worked. The fact that it does not work makes the basic differences between the two more evident. Since both sides arise from a similar background, it is not surprising that differences between the two are not always plain. Both actually have a similar understanding of the Word, which, when pressed for precision comes out sounding about the same. However, as the Conservatives seem to understand better than the Moderates, there is an underlying difference. As a result, it is the Conservatives who first articulate the difference. The Moderates, in their zeal to defend their belief that they are teaching nothing new respond by striving primarily along a path towards unity. It is only as the Moderates gradually perceive that the Conservatives are on a different path, the path of distinguishing to divide, that the Moderates begin to chart their own course.

One good way to see the difference between the respective stances comes through the issue of the third use of the law. The Moderates find the Conservative position paper

generally "to be an acceptable document."[6] The Conservatives, on the other hand, are very concerned to preserve the literal force of the law even when speaking of the Christian life. In traditional Lutheran terms the first two usages of the law (as a curb and a mirror) are to identify and judge sin. The third (a rule) gives guidance to one who has already responded to the Gospel. To those who have already literalized the Gospel, it is clear that the third use of the law is necessary. The Conservatives are consistent in looking at the written law not only in its accusing function but as the source for the moral Christian life. The Moderates would like to affirm that stance but feel uncomfortable doing so. Although they are moving away from this literalized and legalized concept of morality, they hesitate to deny its validity. In their reaction they are sloganized as "Gospel Reductionists" and their Christian morality is called into question. But, though they do not relate the polarity of the law/Gospel relationship to the polarity of the literal/metaphorical word, they clearly want to maintain it. What the issue of the third use of the law demonstrates clearly is the Conservative tendency to literalize all things, including the morality that guides the life of a Christian. In attempting to restore a polarity that gives balance, the Moderates focus on the Gospel and are labeled "Gospel reductionists" for their efforts.

From the perspective of one who acknowledges the danger of the literal, it is strange to see the historical critical

method as a major point of controversy. The objectivization which this method assumes might fit more suitably in the Conservative camp. Perhaps more than any other, the defense of this method of Biblical interpretation gives the Moderate movement its greatest grief. For one thing, it is difficult to explain. The word "critical" does not sit well with those who hold to a high view of the Scriptural Word.[6] And even those who get beyond the terms find that they are involved in an area generally limited by a rather sophisticated level of scholarship. Although the Moderates are able to define this method through a relatively brief summary of five or six steps,[7] they have to add specific "Lutheran Presuppositions" lest the distinctive revelatory quality of the Word be lost amidst the canons of scientific objectivity.[8] In a sense it speaks well for the Moderates that they do not lose the polarity of the Word by acceding uncritically to the scientific approach to Biblical studies. However, a defense of the historical critical method is difficult, for it tends to place the Moderates in the position of being the real literalists.

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[6]See Ibid, p. 67, for the Moderates attempt to explain the meaning.

[7]Ibid., pp. 68-69.

[8]See Ibid., pp. 71-74, for the "presuppositions" and necessary controls.

On this issue the Conservative position paper is brief yet specific. Basically it rejects any method that might cast doubt on historical events, or imply that there is error in Holy Scripture.[9] In response the Moderates make several observations which show an understanding of the Word that goes far beyond a scientific objectivism. First they criticize the Conservative definition of the historical critical method for its failure to take account of the "divine side" of the Sacred Scriptures. Second, as the Moderates point out, there is no single historical critical method.

> It is our conviction that the major disagreements we have in this area revolve around our definition of the historical critical method. What one side understands with this method is not at all what the other side understands. . . . To make a definition a point of division seems to us the height of folly.[10]

Thus the Moderates are moving beyond definition as a means to achieve concensus. Definition, as they point out, is being used in this instance to further the division. The Moderates clearly want to preserve the full scope of the divine Word. However, the fact that they are placed in a position of defending the historical critical method clouds their stance.

One of the best opportunities the Moderates have to express their understanding of the divine nature of the Word

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[9] Ibid., pp. 80-82.

[10] Ibid., p. 83.

occurs over the issue of Gospel and Scriptures. Because of the Moderates' constant appeal to the Gospel, Conservatives accuse them of a form of reductionism that does not take the fullness of the Word seriously. The issue, as the Conservatives see it, is the authority of the Word itself. They ask, "Is Scripture authoritative on all matters on which it clearly speaks, or only on those matters which directly touch or affect the Gospel?"[11] Although the Conservatives acknowledge the Gospel to be the chief article of the Christian faith, the content of the Gospel relies for its authority on the Scriptural Word. The Moderates respond that the Gospel is the key that opens the door to the entire Bible.[12] It is this key that prevents a "flat reading of Scripture passages" and the danger of turning the Bible "into a book of laws, moralisms, and proof texts."[13] Note how close the Moderates are at this point to identifying the literalness of their opponents' consciousness. All that remains is a clearer presentation of the law/Gospel polarity in the Word and their position would sound virtually identical to Barfield's.

Strangely enough it is the Conservatives who try to pin

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[11]Ibid., p. 32.

[12]Ibid., p. 40.

[13]Ibid.

the law/Gospel polarity on the Moderates, by way of a critique. The Conservatives characteristically set up seven distinctions that they perceive between the two views. Number two illustrates the Conservative method and comes close to identifying the polarity in the Moderate stance.

> 2.a. The Moderate caucus is willing to say that all Scripture is reliable as it teaches Law and Gospel.
> b. The Conservative Caucus believes in the total authority and inerrance of Scripture in all matters which Scripture speaks of or touches upon. [14]

The Moderate understanding may not correspond completely with Barfield's polarity. Nevertheless, even the Conservatives recognize that tendency. What is lacking, however, is Barfield's clear judgment of the literalness that the Conservatives claim to be authoritative. The argument comes close to an identification of Conservative literalness versus Moderate polarity, but that difference is never dealt with directly.

The issue entitled "Inspiration and Inerrancy" does at least present the reality that an understanding of the Word is at the root of the controversy. However, the debate revolves around the word "inerrancy" rather than the nature of literalness. If the two words are interchanged, then the danger in a literal consciousness is observed rather well by the Moderates.

> If a definition of inerrancy which stresses the flawless character of factual precision

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[14] Ibid., p.

> of all parts of the Bible is raised to the level of a doctrine and considered necessary for maintaining the authority of Scripture and the truth of the Gospel. then serious problems arise.[15]

The Moderates point out that the claim for an inerrant (literal) understanding of the Scriptural Word goes beyond that which this Word claims for itself. Moreover, rather than supporting the authoritative nature of the Word it detracts from the true authority.

> All authority is from God; Scripture is authoritative simply because it is God's Word. Through that Word of law and Gospel, the Spirit works to create and sustain faith in Christ.[16]

The purpose of the Word is to provide access to a form of consciousness (faith) which operates through the living principle (Spirit) of polarity (law and Gospel). The words may not be exact but the understanding of the Word is again remarkably similar to that of Barfield. The authoritative Word does not rest on a foundation of literalness but on a polarity which can bring about a participating consciousness.

The Conservative Caucus, on the other hand, finds it imperative to defend an inerrant (literal) Word together with its logical implications. Inerrancy in all matters, including scientific, geographical and historical, is a claim, they assert, the Scriptures do make of themselves.[17]

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[15] Ibid., p. 1.

[16] Ibid., p. 2.

[17] Ibid., p. 10.

> The nature of this inerrancy is to be defined in terms of the Bible conforming in its statements with events that actually happened, with things as they really are.[18]

This, they say, is not to be interpreted as pure literalism. They allow for verbal inexactitude in quotations, figurative and hyperbolic language, mythic terminology, and accommodation to ancient cosmological expressions.[19] Yet on the same page they reject any attempt to restrict inerrancy on the basis of their belief that errors in history, geography, and science are unimportant. Though it is difficult to see much difference between "verbal inexactitude" and "error," the Conservative stance cannot be dismissed that easily. It is representative of a definable mind-set. Certainly there is a kind of circularity in its arguments. They contend that their understanding of the Scriptural Word is not a <u>a priori</u> but comes from the text itself.[20] Again, thinking of the word "inerrancy" in terms of "literal" what is revealed is not so much a position as a way of thinking. There is no more circularity here than there is in any way of thinking. The problem then is not with their logic nor their circularity. The problem is with an objectivizing

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[18]Ibid., p. 11.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid. (That which is inerrant is inerrantly known because it asserts its inerrancy.)

of reality to the extent that those who do not participate in their circularity are judged wrong. When a stance is objectivized as true, any other stance is false. A literal consciousness defines in order to separate.

Strangely enough the Moderate response to this Conservative position is remarkably brief and generally positive. In a desire to emphasize that which unites, they state their general agreement with the Conservative position with regard to inspiration. Although they have some comments critical of inerrancy, their main concern is to show that they, too, operate within the circularity that assumes truth to be generated from the divine Word. Therefore, the central point at issue is whether inerrancy has in fact been established on the basis of Scripture alone.[21] Even though it may be understandable that the Moderates would appeal to the Word rather than a prior understanding of the nature of that Word, it is clear that the underlying difference between the two has yet to be articulated. The Conservative consciousness has not been identified or judged. And so the Conservative caucus continues on the road of definition and exclusion. As they state in their response, "two conflicting views on inerrancy cannot both be tolerated in the Church's teaching."[22]

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[21]Ibid., p. 14.

[22]Ibid., p. 16.

The divisiveness inherent in a literal consciousness is never exposed. The Moderates are able to make some see the seriousness of the issues, but hesitate to verbalize a complete rejection of the literal consciousness. However, as the events develop, the Moderate movement experiences a divisive cutting away. The literal sees no need for the metaphorical.

The Actions of a Literal Consciousness

One reason why the model of the Missouri Synod controversy is so useful is that it relates the theoretical with specific action. The position outlined in A Statement is applied to the professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. A Fact Finding Committee, authorized at a Synodical convention and appointed by the Synodical president, interviews each professor personally. These interviews are taped, and relevant sections compiled in a report sent throughout the Synod. In a sense it is this action that sets in motion a series of events that eventually lead the majority of the faculty and students to take action as well. It may appear strange that the vast majority would feel forced to leave. Normally it is the majority who stay and a dissenting minority who leave. This is the reality that we are used to in American democracy where power resides with the majority. To understand the full implications of the Seminary investigation it must be remembered that power, in this case, rests with the majority at the Synodical level. Here the crucial

Synodical Conventions are dominated by a 60 percent Conservative majority. President Preus begins the investigation knowing that he has this kind of support. The theoretical delineated by A Statement begins to identify positions with people. The theoretical now takes on bodily form.

The Investigation of Concordia Seminary

The format of the Synodical President's Report, the Blue Book, is significant. After a preface that pleads for healing and reconciliation,[23] President Preus writes his view of Synodical history. He notes difficulties that have historically troubled the Synod and describes his decision to act in April of 1970. This is the point at which he appoints a Fact Finding Committee.[24] This desire to define "facts" in a situation of difficulty, cannot help but proceed in the direction of isolating and removing the causes of the difficulty. The plea for healing and reconciliation assumes the form of major surgery. The next step is to isolate the disease. This then is the task of the Fact Finding Committee. Using the positions articulated in A Statement, divergencies in the faculty are listed.[25] For example, under "Synodical Position," the following is

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[23]Preus, Blue Book, p. 3.

[24]Ibid., p. 11.

[25]Ibid., pp. 26-31.

stated:

> Lutherans subscribe to the doctrinal content of the Confessions, understanding "doctrinal content" inclusively. It includes, for example, such items as the confessors' literal understanding of the factualness of the Biblical accounts of the creation and the fall of man.[26]

In a parallel column, under "Other Positions," is stated:

> Lutherans subscribe to the doctrinal content of the Confessions, understanding "doctrinal content" restrictively. The confessional view of the factualness of the creation and the fall of Adam and Eve, for example, is not included in confessional subscription because it is not considered to be a doctrinal matter.[27]

In a similar fashion other doctrines are included, with special emphasis on teachings regarding Holy Scriptures and the use of historical critical methodology. In each case the "Synodical Position" is stated over against "Other Positions." The report continues with extensive quotes from interviews intended to show the existence of these "Other Positions." The Blue Book then concludes with the President's plan for action. He has identified the problem. Now he must remove it. Thus the format of the Blue Book is in itself indicative of the literal consciousness it exemplifies. The President is looking for facts. Those causing difficulty are identified as doubters if not deniers of this factual mentality. These then must be excluded through a definite plan of action.

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[26] Ibid., p. 26.

[27] Ibid.

One value in the Blue Book is that it does effectively delineate two forms of consciousness and sets them over against each other. This is done not only through summary statements but through recording the actual content of the interviews with professors. To preserve some anonymity the professors are not named, but are each given a particular letter of the alphabet. Whatever the motivation behind this device, it does tend to focus attention away from personalities and onto positions. It is a form of consciousness that the President is determined to identify and eliminate. Thus the interaction between Professor and Committee becomes a kind of model. What follows is but one illustration of the interaction. This particular example is from the section arranged to demonstrate theological permissiveness among some professors. What is exposed however, is much more. Here is but one example of the difficulty when a literal mentality attempts to dialogue.

Professor P Transcript

Committee: The one question that I have, you have that lovely picture of Jesus as Representative of the Second Adam, you know, in there. Would you consider it the, because you made so much of that Romans 5 - absolutely basic not only to your belief but to good Lutheran Christian belief to accept the fact that there was a person by the name of Adam as the first man?

Prof. P: No I will say frankly not. The Adam language is typological language, and how necessary the historicity of Adam is to the validity of that typology I don't know, Adam, as we all know, means man.

Committee: What do you think Paul meant there? To Paul what did it mean, talking about Adam, first sin, and so forth?

Prof. P: What are you asking me? I know what it says in the text.

Committee: I am asking you how Paul, as he develops it in Romans 5, is thinking of a man, a historical man, Adam, who of course means humanity but who in Genesis is given an identify as an individual, who elsewhere is given an identity as an individual. Is Paul thinking of an individual, or is he thinking of all mankind? In which case if he is thinking of all mankind, what does this do to the concept of original sin?

Prof. P: Yes, he opened up the door, didn't he?

Committee: Sorry about that.

Prof. P: Well, really there are vast exegetical questions there and large systematic questions. And they are issues I have been concerned with and upon which I have not reached answers that satisfy me completely. But you do deserve a straight answer. As far as I can tell, Paul being a man of the year 30 or 40 A.D., probably beleived that Adam was a historical character.[28]

Here is the kind of dialogue that occurs in a variety of forms throughout the controversy. The one side is trying to pin down points of factuality. The other is attempting to preserve some added dimension of the Word. True dialogue never occurs and likely could not occur as long as the forms of consciousness at work are not distinguished. Although the Committee raises such terms as doctrinal permissiveness to the point of being judgmental, the appeal of the professors is towards the kind of openness that permits the Word to live.

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[28]Ibid., p. 93. Since this is a transcript from an oral interview, the sentence structure is not as precise as would otherwise be the case. The above citation is copied as it was transcribed in the Blue Book.

However, this openness is increasingly difficult to maintain.

The next major step is an attempt by the faculty majority to defend their position to the wider Church. This takes the form of what was to be called the Brown Book, entitled Fact Finding or Fault Finding? Although this title itself shows the faculty to be protagonists of conflict, the content further fans the flame. In President Tietjen's introduction the Fact Finding Committee Report is labeled as unfair, unreliable, untrue, less that Scriptural and unLutheran. He calls it "prejudice in search of proof,"[29] and thus not a genuine attempt to ascertain facts. He asserts that the faculty profile is at least distorted and the general summary position statements misrepresentative.[30] Scripture is used as a principle of cognition and a preoccupation with historicity renders the Gospel into something less than the Scriptural Word. In that sense he calls the report less than Scriptural, and, because the Gospel is not at the center, judges the theology to be unLutheran.[31] But like it or not, the Blue Book has done its job. Even if the whole approach, from the formation of the committee to the format of the book, is biased, it is a bias that repre-

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[29]John H. Tietjen, Fact Finding or Fault Finding?: An Analysis of President J. A. O. Preus' Investigation of Corcordia Seminary (St, Louis, Mo.: Concordia Seminary, undated), p. 2. Hereafter referred to as the Brown Book.

[30]Brown Book, pp. 5-6.

[31]Ibid., pp. 8 and 12.

sents a predominant form of consciousness in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. It is this reality that the Brown Book cannot overcome. Against its will, the faculty and its supporters must deal with the majority mind-set that it perceives increasingly to be "less than Scriptural" and "unLutheran."

It may be too simple to identify the Conservative cause with literalness, and the Moderates with the preservation of polarity. But with this model in mind, the moral dilemma of the Moderates becomes more evident. It is easy to see that a literalist would find no value in the metaphorical, and may in fact seek to kill it. Barfield's own struggle as depicted in This Ever Diverse Pair describes that reality. Burden finds it difficult to appreciate that which Burgeon adds. In Barfield's example, however, the murder does not take place. Burden achieves some glimmer of understanding when confronted with the reality of death. In the Missouri Synod conflict, the murder is accomplished, and with it a heightened sense of the moral dimension. As the Moderates discover, it is impossible to explain to a literally-minded culture the danger of such literalness. Because they adopt a more open stance, the Moderates cannot engage in the kind of divisiveness that is used against them. Though they try to speak in strong terms, they find it difficult to convince the majority that their openness is morally required. The Conservative appeal to that which is literal, factual, and

of course legal, places the Moderates in the constant position of being defensive. This means that the Conservatives control the action while the Moderates are left to react. With this momentum the literal mind is free to pursue its own ends. If the Moderates try to assert their position on moral grounds, the only action open to them is a reaction combined with judgment. After much soul-searching this is the action taken.

The Formation of Seminex

Certainly the agonizing that goes on during the early months of 1974 is not limited to any one group. There is constant frustration. The Conservatives cannot understand why everyone does not simply acknowledge the validity of their position. The Moderates feel pressures that not only threaten their theology but their jobs and futures as well. Perhpas the most frustrated, though, are those who find themselves in a position where they have to pick a side even if they do not want to. These agonizings and frustrations are difficult to verbalize and plunge far deeper into the controversy that the events themselves can testify. What follows then is not so much an attempt to relate all the implications, but to describe the impact of a literal consciousness.

The events that culminate in the formation of Concordia Seminary in Exile, (Seminex), have been documented in a

variety of forms. Synodically oriented publications such as Affirm and Christian News describe events from the Conservative perspective. Since the Moderates are continually in the process of organizing, it is not until September of 1972 that a semi-regular publication, Info, is published. By October of 1973 this gives way to the more thorough newspaper, Missouri in Perspective. The Moderate stance is also proclaimed through Richard Neuhaus' Forum newsletter. Of course, the newsworthy nature of the controversy also brings the media into the picture, especially the St. Louis Post Dispatch. The religion editor of that newspaper, James E. Adams, summarizes the results of his reporting in book form under the title, Preus of Missouri; and the Great Lutheran Civil War. However, the most useful documentaries thus far to appear are Fred Danker's No Room in the Brotherhood and the official report of Concordia Seminary's Board of Control, Exodus from Concordia. Seminex Professor Danker, as one might expect, defends the Moderates. In a particularly dramatic way he lists specific people as casualities of the "purge."[32] The Conservative perspective comes across with equal drama and moral firmness in the official Board Report. It is dedicated to the five minority professors, "whose faithful and courageous witness in the time of crisis, awakened

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[32]Frederik W. Danker, No Room in the Brotherhood: The Preus-Otten Purge of Missouri (St. Louis, Mo.: Clayton Publishing House, Ind., 1977), pp. 325-349.

and encouraged others to contend for the faith."[33]

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[33]Exodus from Concordia, official report of Concordia Seminary's Board of Control, frontispiece. An exhaustive study of the history and nature of the Missouri Synod would add depth to the perspectives presented in this chapter. However, such a study goes beyond the parameters within which the present thesis is being defended. It must be noted, though, that the controversy cannot be understood in isolation from the history which forms its context. Two books on that history are Walter O. Forster's Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), and Carl S. Mundinger's Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1947). A valuable study on the question of whether the Missouri Synod is simply a Lutheran form of Fundamentalism is Milton Rudnick's Fundamentalism and the Missouri Synod (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1966). Rudnick argues that the Missouri Synod rejected the Reformed orientation of Fundamentalist theology as well as millenialism. There was, however, appreciation for the Fundamentalists view of Biblical authority. Perhaps the classic presentation of the theology that is generally representative of the Missouri Synod is Francis Pieper's three volumes of Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1953, originally published as Christliche Dogmatik in 1917, vol 2; 1920 vol. 3; and 1924, vol. 1). Though Pieper has clear words on the infallible nature of the Scriptural Word (Vol. 1, p. 3), it is also significant he first published volume 2, over 500 pages on the centrality of Christ. The historical context includes the seeds that lead to both sides of the controversy. It is important to know something of that context in order to feel the depth of emotion that is involved. This dissertation, however, begins with the existence of the sides and examines the division which results.

It might be objected that the assumption of two sides fails to take seriously the many who strongly resisted the growing division. Paul Bretscher's argument in the book After the Purifying, expresses the feelings of those who saw values and sins on both sides.[34] He suggests that a truly Lutheran understanding of the Word of God will overcome differences. Although Moderates have tended to appreciate his position, Conservatives such as those of the Christian News view him as an enemy to their cause. It is perhaps more than happenstance that those who try to maintain a polarity are immediately placed in the Moderate camp.

It is hardly fair to accuse everyone taking a Conservative stance of hypocrisy. And yet to expose the moral dimension of the events that lead to the formation of Seminex, it is necessary to identify and judge those who hold a position that is somehow "outside" them. This separation, or literalizing of morality, does fit the consciousness that has been identified with the Conservative movement in the Missouri Synod controversy. Although there are, no doubt, those who hold to this stance with their whole being, the very objectivity of that style of morality, makes it especially vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy. It is, therefore, not surprising that the man who is a staunch

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[34]Paul Bretscher, After the Purifying (River Forest, Ill.: Lutheran Education Association, 1975), pp. 102-103.

defender of the literal Word and adherence to Synodical rules, would be the target of the Moderate charge that the administration is "morally bankrupt." This charge from the Conservative perspective is indefensible. President Preus in fact warns that the laxness and permissiveness taught by the Moderates is in itself immoral. Yet the observation that the real Preus could be separated from his words has been documented by James Adams. This relatively neutral observer notes in his book Preus of Missouri:

> Missouri Moderates and critics say Jack Preus, heart, soul, body, and mind, is never all there sitting across from you. There are too many Jack Preuses in search of who knows what destinies. Unlike Conservative leaders in other churches who have pastorally diffused their "liberals," Jack Preus has not convinced Missouri Moderates he really believes the "reality" of which he speaks.[35]

A kind of paradigmatic dialogue that tends to support the above judgment occurs early in 1972. At this time, Old Testament Professor Arlis Ehlen is singled out because he teaches the historical critical method. His teaching contract is placed in jeopardy. In the account by James Adams, Seminary President Tietjen and Synodical President Preus agree at a compromise before the February 1972 Board meeting. Tietjen hears Preus agree to about a dozen peace proposals,

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[35]James E. Adams, Preus of Missouri: A Report on the Great Lutheran Civil War (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 93-94.

including a one-year contract for Ehlen. However, when Tietjen presents the compromise at the opening Board session, Preus objects to the Ehlen matter and disagrees on other points as well. Tietjen explodes in frustration and the meeting ends in confusion.[36] Later in Tietjen's office, he looks at Preus point blank and says, "Jack, you lied."[37] Preus makes no attempt to deny the accusation. He mainly challenges Tietjen's audacity in accusing him. Adams characterizes the exchange as one between a king and a prophet.

> The king intimidating the prophet. The prophet and his words of wrath and judgment often have a way of standing for centuries, while the king and his words are lost. As of now, the words of Tietjen stand: "Jack, you lied."[38]

Adams goes on to suggest that Preus' use of words may not have been lies so much as a politician's license with language.[39] Here again two views of language interact. The literalist, using language as a tool to achieve his ends, conflicts with a more participatory understanding of the word. Tietjen cannot understand how Preus can use words in a cavalier fashion. Preus is not so much concerned with the

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[36]Ibid., p. 177.

[37]Ibid., p. 178

[38]Ibid., p. 234.

[39]Ibid.

meaning of the words as he is with the power they bring to bear. It is always risky to generalize, especially on the basis of a private dialogue between individuals.[40] But during this period of the Synodical conflict Preus and Tietjen are more than individuals. They are symbols of the respective sides. There are even indications that they see themselves in this manner as well. For example, "the deal" described both in Danker's book and the report of the Board of Control, is an attempt by Preus to cool the conflict through a quiet removal of Tietjen. The basic plot is simply to find him another position. This achieves the status of the melodramatic when "agents" of the respective sides meet in secret and a recording is made to expose the whole affair. However, what is exposed is not clandestine plot. Through this rather legitimate attempt at a resolution it becomes clear the Tietjen in particular is not acting only for himself but for a cause. He refuses a call first because he does not want the future of faculty members tied to political deals. Second, since he is associated with a position which is under investigation as false doctrine, he finds it hard to see how a change of positions is appro-

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[40]John Tietjen has confirmed the essential accuracy of the exchange. However, the events leading up to the confrontation, as Adams presents them, are not precise. President Preus reneged on the arrangement to have Ehlen teach before the February meeting. Therefore, it was not included in the 11 point presentation by Tietjen. With this minor correction the account is true.

priate.[41] Thus Tietjen becomes the representative of the Seminary faculty majority and identifies himself personally with their cause. If "prophet versus king" is an accurate symbol for the personal relationship between Tietjen and Preus, perhaps it is also appropriate for the positions they represent. The word of personal involvment versus the word of objective authority is another way to see something of the morality involved.

It should not be surprising to find authority as a major element in the Conservative consciousness. The centrality of an authoritative inerrant Word naturally leads to a consciousness that places great value on the power for which that Word can be used. The power that can be wielded through doctrinal adherence produces the power to use the authoritative channels of the political structure. Here Preus' political expertise is put to good use. The five to four votes on the Seminary Board of Control, and the sixty percent majority at Synodical conventions apply the power. The Synodical Constitution becomes the source book for effective action. The theme is obedience to Synodical rules and regulations. The objective authority of the Word is acted out by enforcing the rules of Synod. Thus the liter-

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[41] See the Board Report, Exodus from Concordia, pp. 98-100, with the documentation of Tietjen's rejection of the deal on p. 98. Danker verifies the essential account in No Room in the Brotherhood, pp. 262-266.

alizing of the Word is taken as far as it can go. People are identified on the basis of their stance and dealt with through literalizing the structure of the Synod. "Walking together" (the meaning of "Synod") becomes conformity to the rules. Certainly it is hard to judge such obedience as immoral. Yet the Seminary majority has either to acquiesce to this understanding of the Word or act contrary to the rules. What results they see as an act of faith. To the conservative mind it is clearly an act of rebellion.

On January 20, 1974, John Tietjen is suspended by the Board of Control from his position as Seminary president. In the words of the Board report:

> Dr. Tietjen was unwilling to be governed by the decisions of the Synod as they pertained to his and his colleagues' stated doctrinal position. Under these conditions, the Board of Control on January 20, 1974, was left with no choice but to suspend Dr. Tietjen temporarily from his position under the provisions of Bylaw 6.79d, which provides for such action when the unresolved charges are of such a serious nature.[42]

In response the students declare a moratorium of all classes until such a time as the Board of Control would officially and publicly declare which members of the faculty are false teachers and what teachings they violate. In a show of solidarity the faculty joins with President Tietjen by issuing a statement on the 22nd declaring his suspension to

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[42] Exodus from Concordia, p. 93.

be their own. In view of these realities, Dr. Scharlemann, the newly appointed interim President, closes the Seminary, but announces that all classes are to be resumed on the 28th. On that day some forty students come to classes together with five professors. The majority of students and faculty are engaged in making their position known to the wider Church. On February 12, the Faculty Majority calls for the reinstatement of President Tietjen as a condition for returning to classes. The Board sees this as an authority conflict. In a radio broadcast, Chairman E. J. Otto says:

> The Board's reaction was, "All right, we have two choices. One, we accede to these demands. We meet these requirements. In which case the faculty really will have taken over the function of the Board of Control. They would be setting the policies." The Board could have gone that route.
>
> The other route would say, "No, we will not undo these actions. We are the Board of Control, you are faculty. We each have our sphere. You stay in yours, we will stay in ours." That was the position we took as responsible servants of the Church. We could not in good conscience bow to their ultimatum. Therefore, we in effect said to the faculty, "You will be in the classrooms on Tuesday the 19th. You already have not worked for a month. If you are not in the classroom on Tuesday, you will have terminated your connection with the Seminary."[43]

Otto concludes by noting that there is no response from the faculty by the appointed deadline of noon, the 18th. Therefore, legally the faculty majority has breached their con-

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[43]Ibid., p. 117.

tracts and terminated their employment. Theologically they had set aside their divine calls.[44] From the perspective of the Board of Control the authority is rightfully theirs and their actions well within the bounds of legality. The onus of separation rests with the faculty majority.

What the Board perceives as a matter of authority and legality, the faculty majority believes to be a matter of morality and faith. Fred Danker describes that faculty meeting held on the morning of the 18th. After reading the resolution of the Board of Control, which in effect fires them as of noon, Professor Bertram gives some impressions of the Board and its decision. He states that the minority on the Board tried in vain to resist passage of the document, but to no avail. They do not have the power. The faculty cause is being presented as a rebellion. Thus, there is nothing that can be done. At exactly 12:01 the faculty majority rises, sings The Church's One Foundation and accepts the reality that they are no longer employees of Concordia Seminary.[45] The student majority independently adopts a resolution critical that the Board of Control has never brought specific charges of false doctrine against the professors. They state that the termination of contracts is

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[44] Ibid., p. 117.

[45] Danker, No Room in the Brotherhood, p. 305.

immoral and therefore they cannot in good conscience continue their education under the present conditions.[46] This same kind of judgmental language is included in a letter sent by the faculty majority the next day. In it they declare:

> We cannot return to our class and pretend that we have business as usual, even though we would like to. We wish we could remain in our offices and continue to teach in the classrooms at 801 DeMun.
>
> What makes it impossible? The synodical administration and seminary Board of Control are silencing the Word of God, stifling the Biblical Gospel. That Scriptural Gospel, which is the heart and focus of our Synod's teaching and the well-spring of fraternal and evangelical actions and relationships is under seige and is being crushed into silence.[47]

Here then is the result of a direct encounter with a literal consciousness. For one within that stance, the charge of immorality makes no sense. As the Board sees it, it is the Faculty Majority who walked out. If anyone is guilty of silencing the Word of God, they must bear the burden.[48] This literalizing of the deeper freedom of the Word is typical of the frustrated dialogue throughout the controversy. The "stifling of the Gospel" is only truly seen when the root difference is exposed. When the Word is literalized, then all becomes law, including the Gospel

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[46] Ibid., p. 317.

[47] Board of Control, Exodus from Concordia, p. 136.

[48] Ibid., p. 138.

itslef. Because the Moderates are put into a position of having to defend the historical critical method, and because they come out of a tradition that largely assumes the validity of the literal, they are not able to make a frontal attack on the morality of a literal consciousness itself. But as they verbalize their stance the Conservative binding of the Word becomes more and more visible. The objectively authoritative Word established in A Statement is applied to the Seminary investigation, executed through Synodical conventions and actions of the Board of Control, and results in a division between people. The moral judgment could be made at any level. But of greater importance is the simple need for the danger of a literal consciousness to be identified. Such a danger is demonstrated by the interaction between Conservatives and Moderates in the Missouri Synod controversy.

CHAPTER V

THE MORALITY OF LITERALNESS IN CONTEXT

From the arguments and evidence presented, it is fair to conclude that the recent conflict in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is indeed an instance of that which Barfield identifies as the idolatry of a literal consciousness. By the same procedure, however, it could no doubt be demonstrated that Owen Barfield is guilty of denying the literal truth of God's Word as the Missouri Synod identifies it. Assuming that such a thesis could be defended, a question arises as to the value in any attempt to demonstrate the truth of a basic standpoint. If circularity is inherent in the proof then any standpoint could be chosen with equal, albeit arbitrary success. Although the choosing of Barfield's stance is, to the present writer, more than arbitrary, the issue must be raised and dealt with.

The argument towards which this study is directed includes a more or less implicit assumption that morality not only flows from a position, but can be applied to positions as well. In one of the few books dealing with this subject, H. A. Hodges declares that a basic belief is not chosen at random. It is a moral act for which the believer is to be held responsible.

> It is in the principles themselves, in a man's standpoint and the attitudes underlying it, that the ethical character of his thinking properly resides. It is ethical in the deepest sense. In adopting such and such basic attitudes, he determines what kind of a world can exist for him. What the quality and structure of experience shall be for him, what life itself shall be for him and for those who come under his influence. He determines whether, and in what ways he is to be a source of enrichment or of impoverishment to human life and experience generally.[1]

Hodges suggests that it is immoral to cling to a belief in a thoughtless way, for a closed mind precludes judgment. A person cannot judge what he does not understand. Although faith does not fall completely within the limitations of understanding, the intellect is not excluded from its content. Furthermore, the region of character and its involvement with faith heightens the conclusion that a standpoint is a moral act. In Hodges' judgment, therefore, we should be able to ask of a principle or a basic attitude whether or not it opens up possibilities of life, experience, and activity.[2]

There are those who would argue with the criteria Hodges suggests. Some might cling to a concept like grace and argue that faith is an act of God which cannot be judged by any criterion. Hodges himself admits that he could

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[1]H. A. Hodges, Languages, Standpoints and Attitudes (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 65.

[2]Ibid., p. 63.

never find universal acceptance for the principle he advocates.[3] But he sees a compelling need to try. The divisions which beliefs and attitudes foster have produced antagonisms and wars of increasing ferocity. As the world grows smaller the chance grows larger that differences between attitudes and beliefs could lead to mutual annihilation. The need to judge between standpoints is no longer an arbitrary one with purely academic interest.

In the case of Barfield and the Missouri Synod, judging one by the other is always possible. However, this exercise can be reduced to the point of having little more significance than simply picking one over the other. Clearly this is not the present writer's intention. In bringing the two perspectives into contact a clash becomes visible which involves specific action. The morality of that action cannot help but reflect on the morality of the standpoint itself. Specifically, the morality of a literal consciousness in the Missouri Synod shows itself through distinguishing in order to divide. From the format of the Blue Book to the actual events surrounding the formation of Seminex, a process of separation is carried out in the name of defending the literal truth of Scriptures and Confessions. Literalness and a process of dividing people go together in the instance under examination. What remains is to see a broader picture through

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[3] Ibid., p. 64.

these events. There is a context both of the form of consciousness identified in the Missouri Synod, as well as that of Owen Barfield. Though it is virtually impossible to document all the nuances of these contexts there are some general directions that can be sketched.

Morality in the Context of Literalness

One conflict which involves the kind of issues dealt with in the Missouri Synod controversy is the so-called battle for the Bible currently being waged by those generally identified under the umbrella of Evangelicalism. This group is by no means limited by a label and is indeed found within many denominational names. Its identity hinges on a stance, and that stance is founded on the certainty of an inerrant Word. In reading the debate as presented by periodicals such as Christianity Today, it is interesting to see how an issue that seems to be essentially theological revolves around a particular world view. Harold Lindsell, author of The Battle for the Bible, argues that the root issue is one of epistemology.

> For anyone who professes the Christian faith, the root question is: From where do I get my knowledge on which my faith is based? The answers to this question are varied, of course, but for the Christian at least, it always comes full circle to the Bible. When all has been said and done, the only true and dependable source for Christianity lies in the book we call the Bible.[4]

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[4]Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 17.

With this standpoint, it is not surprising to hear Lindsell praise the administration of the Missouri Synod. Not only is he complimentary towards their position but also towards their use of the structure of the denomination to accomplish the removal of John Tietjen.[5] For Lindsell it is clear that truth is a stand on the inerrant Word, and that morality flows from it. Once a position of "errancy" is accepted, Lindsell observes that it is always accompanied by moral failure and ethical deceit.[6]

Carl F. Henry, former editor of Christianity Today, takes this standpoint into a wider context. He, too, believes that once errancy is affirmed, faith is no longer based on firm epistemological credentials.[7] Among those whom he identifies as defenders of this truth are Robert Preus and J. Warwick Montgomery.[8] Among those who, to Henry's mind, are a bit less orthodox are men like F. F. Bruce. Bruce made the mistake of writing an appreciative introduction to a book which is critical of the hard-lined stance in the debate

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[5]Ibid., p. 82.

[6]Ibid., p. 207.

[7]Carl F. Henry, "Conflict over Biblical Inerrancy," Christianity Today, XX, No. 16 (May 7, 1976), p. 833.

[8]Ibid. p. 823.

currently being waged within the evangelical camp. Bruce defends Dewey Beegle's critique of the "Maginot-line mentality" where the doctrine of Scripture is concerned.

> The Word of God is something alive and active, not least when it bursts the confining bands in which our well-meant definitions try to enclose and protect it.[9]

Bruce's rather mild warning against a mind-set that seeks to confine by definition is supported by Beegle in a different context. He observes that the whole idea of a Biblical inerrancy approach to systematic theology comes from the model of science.[10] So the familiar constellation of an epistemology founded on objective definable data comes to view again. The fact that this view includes a sense of morality that is essentially objective and legal is not hard to understnad. However, some concern over the morality of that very morality is becoming apparent in the Evangelical camp itself.

John Warwick Montgomery is the general editor of a series that includes a study of the relationship between Evangelical Christianity and political conservatism. In this study by Richard V. Pierard, an unequal yoke is observed.

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[9]F. F. Bruce, "Foreword," in Dewey Beegle, Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility (Grand Rapids, Mi.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 10.

[10]Dewey M. Beegle, The Inspiration of Scripture (Philadelphia, Pa.: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 120.

Conservative religion, he says, seems to have more than its share of "parasites of the far right." Characteristics of this group include strong views on the communist menace, rejection of compromise, and a strong sense of individualism.[11] There is also a tendency towards anti-intellectualism, firmly stereotyped views, and a deep hostility towards ideological enemies.[12] This tendency accounts for their conscious fostering of distrust, pressure groups, letter writing, name calling, and whispering campaigns.[13] In Pierard's view, the unwillingness of much of Evangelical Christianity to face up to the menace of this attitude is sapping the strength of its witness.[14] Writing as an Evangelical, it is his hope that the bonds of this yoke will be broken.

Whether Pierard is describing a fringe element of the Evalgelical movement, or the inner morality of a literal consciousness itself, is not easily demonstrated. What is clear, however, is that there is a danger associated with such characteristics as "firmly stereotyped views," "rejection of

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[11]Richard V. Pierard, The Unequal Yoke: Evangelical Christianity and Political Conservatism (Philadelphia, Pa.: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1970), pp. 43-44.

[12]Ibid., p. 45.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., p. 48.

compromise," and "anti-intellectualism." The problem is not so much in any one of these, but the fact that there is a kind of consciousness that interrelates in these terms. Further, by looking at the characteristics that Pierard lists it is the kind of consciousness that tends towards divisiveness. Although the words he chooses may describe the actions and attitudes of a fringe, they can all be directly related to the morality of literalness. A stance that seeks objective inflexibility can easily produce "firmly stereotyped views," "rejection of compromise," and the rest. There is an attitude towards everything from "truth" to other people inherent in a standpoint that literalizes. By expanding into the Evangelical movement a context of literalness begins to open up. That context, however, is an ever-widening one. Just from the citations made to this point further explorations are suggested in such diverse areas as right wing politics and the scientific mind. The literalness that defines in order to divide grows far beyond the parochial struggle in one Lutheran Synod. It is the prevailing view of the entire Western world. Judgment on the morality in this view becomes in its widest context, a judgment on Western culture itself. For one living within this context, such a judgment is difficult to make and even more difficult to communicate. Yet the judgment is necessary. Barfield himself has looked at this context and observed the morality of literalness in its most radical form. He calls the divisiveness inherent in a literal

consciousness an endemic mental disease, a form of schizophrenia, the experience of "cut-offness."[15] This he believes is the predicament of humanity, especially Western humanity. The self that is cut off from a reality that has been objectivized, is a self in isolation. Although this self may not feel guilty about sin, it feels guilty because of it. There is an atmosphere of guilt that Barfield documents.[16] The rising tide of moral sickness (guilt) is correlative to the literalness that is unable to deal with it.[17] This is the true context of the literal consciousness.

Morality in the Context of Polarity

Owen Barfield's thoughts also have a context. He has stirred the thinking of others. And the way this form of thinking moves opens up a morality inherent in the polarity of life and language. Robert Funk, for example, exhibits a concern about the role of the Word in contemporary theology no less serious than that of Harold Lindsell noted above. But here, the Word is not limited to a particular understanding of a particular set of words.

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[15]Owen Barfield, History, Guilt, and Habit, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), p. 51.

[16]Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[17]Ibid., p. 64.

> It does not require notice that language has erupted as a root problem in contemporary theology. That it has done so owes to the fact that nothing less than the Word of God--not doctrine of God--is at stake. It is apparent that if language is usurped finally by man, the possibility of the Word of God entering language is gone. It is thus not without good reason that contemporary theology has fought to resore to language its primordial rights.[18]

It is clear that Funk is not so much concerned about the objective authority of the Word as he is with the Word in relation with the modern mind. He fears that the traditional language of theology can wind up in a ghetto, the cloistered tongue of another age.[19] The need is not the acquisition of correct words, but to bring the Biblical message with true force and power.

> The irony of our dilemma is that literal-mindedness, which gives priority entirely to seeing, is unable to honor that priority because it is held in bondage by the very language it believes it holds virtually at bay.[20]

What is assumed by a literal mind is a preconception of the real that precludes fresh vision. Implicit in Funk's challenge is a view that the modern mind cannot be identified as having a single (literal) understanding of the truth in language. Truth is not an object but resides in the Word itself. Here the views of Heidegger, Bultmann, Fuchs, and

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[18]Robert Funk, Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. xiii-xiv.

[19]Ibid., p. xiv.

[20]Ibid., p. xiii.

Ebeling, are brought into the context. Funk, then, is not denying the truth of the literal so much as he is looking for the interaction between truth and consciousness. The Word, ideally, provides access to a consciousness that is participated.

In discussing parable as metaphor, Funk specifically acknowledges his indebtedness to Barfield.[21] Metaphor, as Funk argues, raises a potential for new meaning which the logical use of language cannot provide. Logical language presupposes the meanings of the words it employs, and presupposes them to be constant. The propositions of logic are, therefore, tautologies encompassing the knowledge already implicit in its terms.[21] Metaphor, on the other hand, provides the cognitive threshhold of poetic intuition. Here, Funk refers the reader to Barfield's "felt change of consciousness." In metaphor, Funk continues, the hearer not only learns about reality but participates in it.[23] Word and reality are encountered in their inner unity as language becomes event. Morality then is a consciousness that participates in the life process. Or, to put it the other way around, immorality is that which cuts off such

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[21]Ibid., p. 129.

[22]Ibid., pp. 137-138.

[23]Ibid., p. 140.

participation.

One bridge to a more explicitly Lutheran context is provided by a man whose significance is acknowledged by Funk, Gerhard Ebeling. To my knowledge, Barfield's name has yet to be invoked positively or negatively in Lutheran circles. Ebeling himself does not do so. And yet, as pointed out earlier, Ebeling has an appreciation for the Word which is linked to Barfield conceptually though not explicitly. In Ebeling's Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language, the broad categories of language are related to theology and morality. One link is that brought about by the divine name. Ebeling speaks of a polarity between the explicit language of faith and the experience of the world. The criteria by which this language is judged has to take into account Jesus as the embodiment of the Word of faith. This dialogue in no way limits the language of faith to a propositional understanding of specific words. Yet the explicit language of faith is necessary to bring about a life oriented morality.[24]

Ebeling suggests that when the experience of the world is in harmony with the divine name, there is naturally involved an unreserved obligation to tell the truth.[25]

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[24]Gerhard Ebeling, Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language, translated from the German by R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 195.

[25]Ibid., p. 196.

Such language is not divisive but for the sake of truth has an obligation to love.[26] If, as language is for Ebeling, "life seeking utterance,"[27] there is an inner morality to the language of faith that requires a participatory consciousness. Here, as in Barfield, there is a relationship between the polarity of language and the experience of life. That life, in the Christian experience is one that is fired from within through the polarity experienced between the language of faith and that of the world. Life then is a form of consciousness, not a form of language. In the writings of Ebeling it is not surprising to find his final appeal not to an inerrant Word, but to a living Christ. The divine/human polarity which that Name names is clear in Ebeling as it is in the mainstream of Lutheran theology. It is worth noting that this appeal is shared by Barfield (in his final participation), Ebeling, and the Moderate cause of the Missouri Synod.

As the context grows there are certain moral elements that can be associated with the polarity of a participating consciousness. It is a consciousness that finds its primary meaning in relationship rather than in isolation. The preservation of life, the need for love, participation in Christ, and a law/Gospel polarity are concepts added to the

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[26]Ibid., p. 198.

[27]Ibid., p. 177.

context by Ebeling. Funk further associates such themes as metaphor, and poetic intuition as over against truth as object or the blindness of literalmindedness. In general there is a feeling of movement in polarity rather than the lifelessness of an idol. But there is also something lacking to this context. That lack is an extended form of human interaction to evaluate. Certainly such instances as the encounter between the literal and the polar in the Missouri Synod conflict provides a model for the moral danger inherent in an objectivized consciousness. But exposing the danger is but the first step in providing and understanding of the kind of life that can burgeon when literalness is no longer dominant. The documentation that polarity can bring about a more life producing form of morality has yet to be written. A context has been developed on theoretical grounds. But now, as Barfield observes, a new habit of thinking must be developed. Literalness is the collective consciousness from which some have struggled to be free. The possibility for a new form of participatory consciousness is very real. In the process, however, the morality included in that new standpoint is every bit as important as its existence. Barfield notes that there are already those who seek such a consciousness in order to manipulate it.[28] His plea is for those aware of the need to redeem the literal with a new consciousness to include a responsible morality so that the true potential for life may emerge.

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[28]Barfield, History, Guilt, and Habit, p. 91

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has attempted to demonstrate the idolatry of those who defended literal thinking in the recent controversy of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. To make this judgment three steps were required. First it was necessary to develop a standpoint which was not itself bound by literal thinking. To this end chapters one and two were devoted to Owen Barfield and the way of thinking he has identified. In studying the poetic dimension of life and language, Barfield has observed a polarity which a strictly literal mind does not see. Chapter one presented a way to enter Barfield's way of thinking. Once this polarity is experienced, then the danger in dividing it becomes apparent. When the world of things is set apart and made an object, then a false sense of reality has been created. The traditional term for a thing which has been invested with ultimate reality is the word "idolatry." Chapter two then continued the presentation of Barfield with special reference to the identification of idolatry. Here it was shown why literal thinking was deserving of judgment.

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The second step was to provide a bridge between Barfield's general indictment of Western thought since the Enlightenment and a particular controversy within one segment of Lutheranism. It was shown that this bridge is much more firmly embedded on both sides than one might assume. Lutheranism itself was shown to be a way of thinking, or, in more traditional terminology, a faith. Historically, the origin of this faith rests in a period of history which Barfield treats with appreciation. The Medieval mind is one free from the mind/matter dualism. Therefore, it seems to be more than coincidence that Lutheran theology has traditionally operated with a polarity akin to Barfield's. Chapter three traced both the similarities and differences between the Lutheran law/Gospel relationship and Barfield's description of polarity. However, the most interesting insights emerged when the two ways of thinking were brought into contact with an understanding of words in general and the Scriptural Word in particular. Of primary importance for the argument of the dissertation was the theological danger which resulted when Lutherans limited the truth of Scriptures by means of literal thinking. This effectively rendered the Gospel into law; the symbolic and expansive into the literal and confined. Chapter three concluded with specific examples of literal thinking and the resulting objectivizing of truth.

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The third step was to present the ways of thinking in the recent Missouri Synod controversy and to demonstrate the existence of the idolatry of a literal consciousness. To do this, examples were given of the interaction between literal thinking and one that was more polar. The issue described in chapter four appeared to be the truth of the written Scriptures. However, as the literal mind encountered one which saw a wider significance to the Word, a moral dimension began to come to light. To some extent Barfield predicted that a literal mind would have trouble finding any use for the symbolic. With his standpoint the idolatrous nature of literal thinking was not hard to find. But in addition to this judgment, a moral element began to emerge in terms of how those representing the two ways of thinking dealt with people. Chapter four then did more than simply identify the idolatry of literal thinking in this particular instance. It also pointed to a sense of the moral responsibility to oppose such thinking. Thus the argument of the dissertation began to move beyond the realm of an exercise in thinking to the realm of moral involvement.

Chapter five raised some of the issues which come when one standpoint is placed over against the other. In a way this may seem to be more a continuation on the path that has been explored through this dissertation than its conclusion. Certainly a traditional argument would end by simply summarizing the evidence and arriving at firmly fixed

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conclusions. But the very nature and style of argument in the present case is not one which is so easily disposed. The life-giving polarity which charts the path cannot help but lead into increasing sensitivity to matters involving responsibility towards that life. The argument that has been demonstrated is at the same time in relationship with events which continue. The polarity which cannot be fixed leads towards the moral responsibility that it must not.

A STATEMENT OF SCRIPTURAL AND CONFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES

I. CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD

We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Lord, and that through faith in Him we receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. We confess that "our works cannot reconcile God or merit forgiveness of sins and grace but that we obtain forgiveness and grace only by faith when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake, who alone has been ordained to be the mediator and propitiation through whom the Father is reconciled" (AC, XX, 9). We believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and that all who die without faith in Him are eternally damned. We believe that those who believe in Christ will enjoy a blissful relationship with Him during the interim between their death and His second coming and that on the last day their bodies will be raised.

We therefore reject the following:

1. That we may operate on the assumption that there may be other ways of salvation than through faith in Jesus Christ;
2. That some persons who lack faith in Christ may be considered "anonymous Christians";
3. That there is no eternal hell for unbelievers and ungodly men.

II. LAW AND GOSPEL

We believe that the two chief doctrines of Holy Scripture, Law and Gospel, must be constantly and diligently proclaimed in the church of God until the end of the world, but with due distinction (FC, SD, V, 24). The Law, as the expression of God's immutable will, is to be used by the church to bring men to a knowledge of their sins as well as to provide Christians with instruction about good works (FC, SD, V, 17—18). The Gospel receives the primary emphasis in the ministry of the New Testament, for it is the message that "God forgives them all their sins through Christ, accepts them for His sake as God's children, and out of pure grace, without any merit of their own, justifies and saves them." (FC, SD, V, 25)

We therefore reject the following:

1. That the Gospel is any message or action which brings good news to a bad situation.
2. That the Gospel is a norm or standard for the Christian life, or that the Gospel, in effect, imposes a new law upon the Christian.
3. That what God's law declares to be sinful (for example, adultery or theft) need not be regarded as sinful in all times and situations.
4. That Christians, as men who have been freed from the curse of the Law, no longer need the instruction of the Law to know what God's will is for their life and conduct.

III. MISSION OF THE CHURCH

We believe, teach, and confess that the primary mission of the church is to make disciples of every nation by bearing witness to Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Other necessary activities of the church, such as ministering to men's physical needs, are to serve the church's primary mission and its goal that men will believe and confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

We therefore reject any views of the mission of the church which imply:

That an adequate or complete witness to Jesus Christ can be made without proclaiming or verbalizing the Gospel.

IV. HOLY SCRIPTURE

A. *The Inspiration of Scripture*

We believe, teach, and confess that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit and that God is therefore the true Author of every word of Scripture. We acknowledge that there is a qualitative difference between the inspired witness of Holy Scripture in all its parts and words and the witness of every other form of human expression, making the Bible a unique book.

We therefore reject the following views:

1. That the Holy Scriptures are inspired only in the sense that all Christians are "inspired" to confess the lordship of Jesus Christ.
2. That the Holy Spirit did not inspire the actual words of the Biblical authors but merely provided these men with special guidance.
3. That only those matters in Holy Scripture were inspired by the Holy Spirit which directly pertain to Jesus Christ and man's salvation.
4. That noncanonical writings in the Christian tradition can be regarded as "inspired" in the same sense as Holy Scripture.
5. That portions of the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ contain imaginative additions which had their origin in the early Christian community and do not present actual facts.

B. *The Purpose of Scripture*

We believe that all Scripture bears witness to Jesus Christ and that its primary purpose is to make men wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. We therefore affirm that the Scriptures are rightly used only when they are read from the perspective of justification by faith and the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. Since the saving work of Jesus Christ was accomplished through His personal entrance into our history and His genuinely historical life,

death, and resurrection, we acknowledge that the recognition of the soteriological purpose of Scripture in no sense permits us to call into question or deny the historicity or factuality of matters recorded in the Bible.

We therefore reject the following views:

1. That knowing the facts and data presented in the Scripture, without relating them to Jesus Christ and His work of salvation, represents an adequate approach to Holy Scripture.
2. That the Old Testament, read on its own terms, does not bear witness to Jesus Christ.
3. That it is permissible to reject the historicity of events or the occurrence of miracles recorded in the Scriptures so long as there is no confusion of Law and Gospel.
4. That recognition of the primary purpose of Scripture makes it irrelevant whether such questions of fact as the following are answered in the affirmative: Were Adam and Eve real historical individuals? Did Israel cross the Red Sea on dry land? Did the brazen serpent miracle actually take place? Was Jesus really born of a virgin? Did Jesus perform all the miracles attributed to Him? Did Jesus' resurrection actually involve the return to life of His dead body?

C. *The Gospel and Holy Scripture*

(Material and Formal Principles)

We believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel of the gracious justification of the sinner through faith in Jesus Christ is not only the chief doctrine of Holy Scripture and a basic presupposition for the interpretation of Scripture, but the heart and center of our Christian faith and theology (material principle). We also believe, teach, and confess that only "the Word of God shall establish articles of faith" (SA, II, ii, 15), and that "the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged" (FC, Ep, Rule and Norm, 1) (formal principle). The Gospel which is the center of our theology is the Gospel to which the *Scriptures* bear witness, while the Scriptures from which we derive our theology direct us steadfastly to the *Gospel* of Jesus Christ.

We reject the following distortions of the relationship between the Gospel and the Bible (the material and formal principles):

1. That acceptance of the Bible as such, rather than the Gospel, is the heart and center of Christian faith and theology, and the way to eternal salvation.
2. That the Gospel, rather than Scripture, is the norm for appraising and judging all doctrines and teachers (as, for example, when a decision on the permissibility of ordaining women into the pastoral office is made on the basis of the "Gospel" rather than on the teaching of Scripture as such).
3. That the historicity or facticity of certain Biblical accounts (such as the Flood or the Fall) may be questioned, provided this does not distort the Gospel.
4. That Christians need not accept matters taught in the Scriptures that are not a part of the "Gospel."

D. *The Authority of Scripture*

We believe, teach, and confess that because the Scriptures have God as their author, they possess both the divine power to make men wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (causative authority), as well as the divine authority to serve as the church's sole standard of doctrine and life (normative authority). We recognize that the authority of Scripture can be accepted only through faith and not merely by rational demonstration. As men of faith, we affirm not only that Holy Scripture is powerful and efficacious, but also that it is "the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong." (FC, Ep, Rule and Norm, 7)

We therefore reject the following views:

1. That the authority of Scripture is limited to its efficacy in bringing men to salvation in Jesus Christ.
2. That the authority of Scripture has reference only to what the Scriptures *do* (as means of grace) rather than to what they *are* (as the inspired Word of God).
3. That the Scriptures are authoritative for the doctrine and life of the church, not because of their character as the inspired and inerrant Word of God but because they are the oldest available written sources for the history of ancient Israel and for the life and message of Jesus Christ, or because they were written by the chosen and appointed leaders of Israel and of the early church, or because the church declared them to be canonical.
4. That the Christian community in every age is directly inspired by the Holy Spirit and is therefore free to go beyond the doctrine of the prophets and apostles in determining the content of certain aspects of its faith and witness.

E. *The Canonical Text of Scripture*

We believe, teach, and confess that the authoritative Word for the church today is the *canonical* Word, not precanonical sources, forms, or traditions — however useful the investigation of these possibilities may on occasion be for a clearer understanding of what the canonical text intends to say.

We therefore reject the following views:

1. That there are various "meanings" of a Biblical text or pericope to be discovered at various stages of its precanonical history, or that the meaning a canonical text has now may differ from the meaning it had when it was first written.
2. That Biblical materials that are judged to be "authentic" (for example, "authentic" words of Jesus, "authentic" books of Paul, or "authentic" ideas of Moses) have greater authority than "non-authentic" Biblical statements.
3. That certain pericopes or passages in the canonical text of Scripture may be regarded as imaginative additions of the Biblical authors or of the early Christian community and therefore need not be accepted as fully authoritative.
4. That extracanonical sources may be used in such a way as to call into question the clear meaning of the canonical text.

5. That the essential theological data of Biblical theology is to be found in the precanonical history of the Biblical text.
6. That certain canonical materials have greater authority than other canonical materials because of their greater antiquity or because they are allegedly more "genuine" or "authentic."
7. That various statements of Jesus recorded in the Gospels may not actually be from Jesus and therefore lack historical factuality or the full measure of His authority.

F. *The Infallibility of Scripture*

With Luther, we confess that "God's Word cannot err" (LC, IV, 57). We therefore believe, teach, and confess that since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, they contain no errors or contradictions but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth. We hold that the opinion that Scripture contains errors is a violation of the *sola scriptura* principle, for it rests upon the acceptance of some norm or criterion of truth above the Scriptures. We recognize that there are *apparent* contradictions or discrepancies and problems which arise because of uncertainty over the original text.

We reject the following views:

1. That the Scriptures contain theological as well as factual contradictions and errors.
2. That the Scriptures are inerrant only in matters pertaining directly to the Gospel message of salvation.
3. That the Scriptures are only functionally inerrant, that is, that the Scriptures are "inerrant" only in the sense that they accomplish their aim of bringing the Gospel of salvation to men.
4. That the Biblical authors accommodated themselves to using and repeating as true the erroneous notions of their day (for example, the claim that Paul's statements on the role of women in the church are not binding today because they are the culturally conditioned result of the apostle's sharing the views of contemporary Judaism as a child of his time).
5. That statements of Jesus and the New Testament writers concerning the human authorship of portions of the Old Testament or the historicity of certain Old Testament persons and events need not be regarded as true (for example, the Davidic authorship of Psalm 110, the historicity of Jonah, or the fall of Adam and Eve).
6. That only those aspects of a Biblical statement need to be regarded as true that are in keeping with the alleged *intent* of the passage (for example, that Paul's statement about Adam and Eve in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 11 do not prove the historicity of Adam and Eve because this was not the specific intent of the apostle; or that the virgin birth of our Lord may be denied because the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke did not have the specific intent to discuss a biological miracle).
7. That Jesus did not make some of the statements or perform some of the deeds attributed to him in the Gospels but that they were in fact invented or created by the early Christian community or the evangelists to meet their specific needs.
8. That the Biblical authors sometimes placed statements into the mouths of people who in fact did not make them (for example, the claim that the "Deuteronomist" places a speech in Solomon's mouth which Solomon never actually made), or that they relate events as having actually taken place that did not in fact occur (for example, the fall of Adam and Eve, the crossing of the Red Sea on dry land, the episode of the brazen serpent, Jesus' cursing of the fig tree, John the Baptist's experiences in the wilderness, Jesus' changing water into wine, Jesus' walking on water, or even Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead or the fact of His empty tomb).
9. That the use of certain "literary forms" necessarily calls into question the historicity of that which is being described (for example, that the alleged midrashic form of the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke suggests that no virgin birth actually occurred, or that the literary form of Genesis 3 argues against the historicity of the Fall).

G. *The Unity of Scripture*

We believe, teach, and confess that since the same God speaks throughout Holy Scripture, there is an organic unity both within and between the Old and New Testaments. While acknowledging the rich variety of language and style in Scripture and recognizing differences of emphasis in various accounts of the same event or topic, we nevertheless affirm that the same doctrine of the Gospel, in all its articles, is presented throughout the entire Scripture.

We reject the view that Holy Scripture, both within and between its various books and authors, presents us with conflicting or contradictory teachings and theologies. We regard this view not only as violating the Scripture's own understanding of itself but also as making it impossible for the church to have and confess a unified theological position that is truly Biblical and evangelical.

H. *Old Testament Prophecy*

Since the New Testament is the culminating written revelation of God, we affirm that it is decisive in determining the relation between the two Testaments and the meaning of Old Testament prophecies in particular, for the meaning of a prophecy becomes known in full only from its fulfillment. With the Lutheran Confessions, we recognize the presence of Messianic prophecies about Jesus Christ throughout the Old Testament. Accordingly, we acknowledge that the Old Testament "promises that the Messiah will come and promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life for His sake" (Apology, IV, 5) and that the patriarchs and their descendants comforted themselves with such Messianic promises (cf. FC, SD, V, 23).

We therefore reject the following views:

1. That the New Testament statements about Old Testament texts and events do not establish their meaning (for example, the claim that Jesus' reference to Psalm 110 in Matthew 22:43-44 does not

establish either that Psalm's Davidic authorship or its predictive Messianic character).

2. That Old Testament prophecies are to be regarded as Messianic prophecies, not in the sense of being genuinely predictive, but only in the sense that the New Testament later applies them to New Testament events.
3. That the Old Testament prophets never recognized that their prophecies reached beyond their own time to the time of Christ.

I. *Historical Methods of Biblical Interpretation*

Since God is the Lord of history and has revealed Himself by acts in history and has in the person of His Son actually entered into man's history, we acknowledge that the historical framework in which the Gospel message is set in Scripture is an essential part of the Word. Furthermore, we recognize that the inspired Scriptures are historical documents written in various times, places, and circumstances. We therefore believe that the Scriptures invite historical investigation and are to be taken seriously as historical documents. We affirm, however, that the Christian interpreter of Scripture cannot adopt uncritically the presuppositions and canons of the secular historian, but that he will be guided in his use of historical techniques by the presuppositions of his faith in the Lord of history, who reveals Himself in Holy Scripture as the one who creates, sustains, and even enters our history in order to lead it to His end.

We therefore reject the following views:

1. That the question of whether certain events described in the Scripture actually happened is unimportant in view of the purpose and function of Holy Scripture.
2. That methods based on secularistic and naturalistic notions of history, such as the following, may have a valid role in Biblical interpretation:
   a. That the universe is closed to the intervention of God or any supernatural force.
   b. That miracles are to be explained in naturalistic terms whenever possible.
   c. That the principle of the economy of miracles may lead us to deny certain miracles reported in the Scriptures.
   d. That the doctrines of Holy Scripture are the result of a natural development or evolution of ideas and experiences within Israel and the early church.
   e. That the message of Scripture can be adequately measured by laws derived exclusively from empirical data and rational observation.
   f. That man's inability to know the future makes genuine predictive prophecy an impossibility.
3. That our primary concern in Biblical interpretation is not with explaining the meaning of the primary sources, namely, the canonical Scriptures, on the basis of the sources themselves.
4. That if the use of historical methods leads to conclusions at variance with the evident meaning of the Biblical text, such conclusions may be accepted without violating the Lutheran view of Scripture or our commitment to the Lutheran Confessions (for example, the claim that it is permissible to deny the existence of angels or a personal devil because of literary, historical, or theological considerations).

V. ORIGINAL SIN

We believe, teach, and confess that God, by the almighty power of His Word, created all things. We also believe that man, as the principal creature of God, was specially created in the image of God, that is, in a state of righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. We affirm that Adam and Eve were real historical human beings, the first two people in the world, and that their fall was a historical occurrence which brought sin into the world so that "since the fall of Adam all men who are propagated according to nature are born in sin" (AC, II, 1). We confess that man's fall necessitated the gracious redemptive work of Jesus Christ and that fallen man's only hope for salvation from his sin lies in Jesus Christ, His Redeemer and Lord.

We therefore reject the following:

1. All world views, philosophical theories, and exegetical interpretations which pervert these Biblical teachings and thus obscure the Gospel.
2. The notion that man did not come into being through the direct creative action of God, but through a process of evolution from lower forms of life which in turn developed from matter that is either eternal, autonomous, or self-generating.
3. The opinion that the image of God in which Adam and Eve were created did not consist of concreated righteousness, that is, a perfect relationship to God.
4. The notion that Adam and Eve were not real historical persons and that their fall was not a real historical event which brought sin and death into the world.
5. The opinion that original sin does not deprive all men of their spiritual powers and make it impossible for them to be in the right relationship to God apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

VI. CONFESSIONAL SUBSCRIPTION

We reaffirm our acceptance of the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and our unconditional subscription to "all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God" (Constitution, Article II; cf. also Bylaw 4.21). We accept the Confessions because they are drawn from the Word of God and on that account regard their doctrinal content as a true and binding exposition of Holy Scripture and as authoritative for our work as ministers of Jesus Christ and servants of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

We accept the following clarifications of the nature of our confessional subscription:

1. We acknowledge that the doctrinal content of the Lutheran Confessions includes not only those doctrines of Holy Scripture explicitly treated in the Confessions but also those Biblical doctrines set forth somewhat indirectly or incidentally, such as the doctrines of Holy Scripture, creation, the Holy Spirit, and eschatology.

2. With the fathers, we recognize that not everything in the Lutheran Confessions is a part of its doctrinal content, but we reject all attempts to abridge the extent of this doctrinal content in an arbitrary or subjective manner. We recognize, for example, that subscription in the Lutheran Confessions does not bind us to all strictly exegetical details contained in the Confessions, or even to the confessional use of certain Bible passages to support a particular theological statement. However, since the Confessions want to be understood as Biblical expositions, we reject the notion that we are not bound by our confessional subscription to the exposition of Scripture contained in the Confessions or to the doctrinal content which the Confessions derive from individual Bible passages.
3. We recognize that the Confessions must be read and studied in terms of the historical situations in which they were written, but we reject the view that our confessional subscription means only that we regard the Confessions as a historically correct response to the problems encountered by the church when the Confessions were written.
4. We recognize that the doctrinal content of the Confessions centers in Jesus Christ and the Gospel of our justification by grace through faith, but we reject the view that the doctrinal content of the Confessions includes only those confessional statements which explicitly and directly deal with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, we do not accept the idea that our subscription to the Lutheran Confessions permits us to reject such confessional positions as the existence of the devil and of angels or that Adam and Eve were real historical persons whose fall into sin was a real historical event.
5. We recognize that the Lutheran Confessions contain no distinct article on the nature of Holy Scripture and its interpretation, but we acknowledge and accept the confessional understanding of the nature of Holy Scripture and of the proper theological principles for its interpretation.
6. We recognize the Lutheran Confessions as a true exposition of Holy Scripture and therefore reject the opinion that our subscription to the Lutheran Confessions leaves us free to reject any doctrinal statements of the Confessions where we feel there is no supporting Biblical evidence.
7. We acknowledge that our subscription to the Lutheran Confessions pledges us to preach and teach in accordance with the entire Holy Scripture. We therefore reject the opinion that all Biblical matters not explicitly treated in the Lutheran Confessions are open questions.
8. We confess that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule and norm for faith and life, and that other writings "should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture" (FC, Ep, 1-2). We therefore reject the notion that it is legitimate to maintain the doctrinal conclusions of the Confessions without accepting their Biblical basis, or to regard formal confessional subscription as an adequate safeguard against improper exegetical conclusions.
9. Finally, we affirm that our acceptance of the Lutheran Confessions means not only that we tolerate the doctrinal content of the Lutheran Confessions as a viable option for Lutheran Christians today but that we in fact preach, teach, and confess the doctrinal content of the Lutheran Confessions as our very own.

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CONCLUSION

The 1971 convention of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod reaffirmed the Synod's desire to abide by its doctrinal position as stated in its constitution (Article II). The Synod clearly stated its conviction that its confessional base is as broad as Holy Scripture and that the Synod accepts anything and everything that the Scriptures teach. Moreover, the Synod declared its right as a Synod to apply its confessional base definitively to current issues and thus conserve and promote unity and resist an individualism which breeds schism.

This Statement expresses the Synod's Scriptural and confessional stance on a number of important topics. It is hoped that the endorsement of this Statement will be of assistance to the Synod in the "conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith" (Constitution, Article III).

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A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Note - An extensive bibliography of the published works of Owen Barfield from 1921-1074 is included in Shirley Sugerman's Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity (Middletown, Ct: Wesleyan University Press, 1976), pp. 228-239. The following is a list of those works which directly contributed to this present study.

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